

THE
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“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5. 6).

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1. 9).

“The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Romans 11. 7).

“If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” – “And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” – “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8. 37, 38; Matthew 28. 19).

WHERE IS THE LORD GOD OF ELIJAH?

(2 Kings 2. 14)

Elijah was an eminent servant of the most High God. Suddenly appearing by divine intervention, his opening words were: “The Lord God of Israel, before whom I stand.” And this was the keynote of the whole of his remarkable life and ministry. He had a single eye for the honour and glory of God, and he looked to Him alone to know His holy mind and will. It is men like this that are sorely needed in the nation and in the church of God today.

In Elijah’s translation to heaven, abundant honour was put upon him as a faithful man of God. Also in this there was a testimony to the Old Testament church of life after death.

But this was a time of crisis both to Israel and to the prophet Elisha personally. Israel as a nation had lost a leader, described as “the chariot of Israel.” Moreover, this was a time of deep sorrow and grief for the younger prophet in the loss of his beloved master and friend. And then what an awful load of responsibility had now fallen on Elisha along with Elijah’s mantle!

Elisha sorely felt all this, and to him it was a solemn question that he asked: “Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” Over the years this question has often been asked despairingly, but we rather think that Elisha asked it in a spirit of prayer. “We cannot do without Thee. ‘God of our fathers, be the God of their succeeding race.’”

Surely there is a similarity between the state of our nation and the church of God today and the state of Israel then; and our prayerful concern is the same as that of Elisha: “Where is *now* the God of Elijah?”

Elijah had proved his God to be almighty – the God who performs miracles – the God far greater than all the priests of Baal – the God who supplies His people’s needs – the God who answers prayer – the God

who remembers His people in their low estate. *This* is “the God of Elijah.”

“Where is He?” There are two answers to that question.

1. He is still in heaven, almighty, in complete control. He loves His people with an everlasting love.

2. He is still with His people on earth. “Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.”

Immediately after Elijah’s translation there was the trial, the testing. The River Jordan lay before and it must be crossed. When Elisha smote the waters with the mantle of Elijah, “they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.”

We have the unknown way before us and, as Rutherford said, “Deep waters cross life’s pathway.” We see them before us: sins, sorrows, troubles, perplexities, difficulties – spiritually and providentially – personally, and in church and state – the unknown way.

“Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” Still almighty, still ever-present with His people. He will bring us safely through. What a depth of divinity there is in the one line that closes one of Henry Fowler’s hymns: “Is He thy God? He’ll bring thee through.” The blessed certainty of it! The value of it!

And then the last great river to be crossed, the river of death. Elijah’s God will be with His people there. But it will be through the precious blood.

“‘Twill Jordan’s icy waves divide,
And land our souls with God.”

THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH

By John Brine (1703-1765)

We trust these gracious remarks, by one who, along with Dr. Gill, is accounted a leading Particular Baptist theologian, will be truly helpful and profitable.

I. Assurance may be considered objectively and subjectively. The former relates to the objects on which faith is supposed to act. This is a firm persuasion of the truth and existence of those objects. For instance, that the Son of God came into our world, and that by His obedience and sacrifice He secured the salvation of some men, or obtained eternal redemption for them. And this is necessarily supposed in all acts of recumbency and dependence on Him for deliverance from sin and the penal consequences of it. By the latter is intended a persuasion in the mind of a poor sinner of his particular interest in Christ, and in His salvation.

II. This latter is not essential to that faith which is of the operation of God, as I apprehend. Several reasons induce me to think that true faith may be, and is sometimes acted where this assurance is wanting.

1. Faith is sometimes expressed by such phrases as do not necessarily include it, *viz.*, seeing of Christ, coming unto Him, hoping in the Lord, and, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." An assurance of the object is plainly supposed in all these, but not the assurance of an interest in Him to whom application is made for help and relief.

2. There is little or small faith, which is attended with fears, jealousies and doubting. "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

3. There is a strong and a weak faith; the latter cannot well be thought to include this assurance in it; for if it does, it will be difficult to show wherein the difference lies between the strong and feeble actings of this grace.

4. In Christ's family there are different classes of Christians. All are subjects of the same grace in kind, but not in degree. Some are babes, not grown up to any considerable pitch of knowledge, experience and spiritual strength. And in His fold there are some lambs, who are to be dealt with very tenderly; it does not seem very likely that these, at present, enjoy that strong consolation which carries the mind above all discouragements and fears. Yet,

III. This favour may be enjoyed.

1. This may be argued with very strong evidence from the nature of divine promises relating to salvation. A conditional promise of benefits neither ascertains the enjoyment of them, in fact, nor is a proper foundation for an assured persuasion of receiving them; but absolute promises ascertain the possession of that good they express, if the promiser is faithful to his word, and in promising exceeds not his power; and are a firm bottom for an assurance of the reception of it. All divine promises relating to salvation are absolute: "I will, and they shall," is the form wherein they run; and therefore they ascertain salvation in fact, and are a solid basis of a steady assurance of it. Since their nature is suited to ingenerate [produce] and support such a persuasion, God doubtless had this gracious end in expressing them. And if He had such an intention, that must respect either the world or the church. Not the world certainly, and, therefore, the church. Again, the church is triumphant and militant. These promises are intended, then, either to confirm and establish the faith of the church triumphant or militant. Not the church triumphant, and, consequently, this must respect the church militant.

And as all generals consist of particulars, every particular is included in the general; hence it follows that all the saints have right to that strong consolation which the promises of God are fitted in their

nature to produce; and it is possible, in the nature of the thing, that they all may, and not to be doubted but some do, at least at some seasons, enjoy it.

2. God, in confirming His promises with His oath, had this gracious end in view, that those “who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them” might have that strong consolation which attends or arises from an assurance of His favour to them, and their security in consequence thereof. Two things are clearly expressed in those words.

i. An act of faith on Christ, fleeing for refuge to Him; and this is supposed to be done antecedent to the enjoyment of that strong consolation. True faith, therefore, may be without it.

ii. That they should enjoy strong consolation who thus flee to Christ for safety and salvation from sin.

3. The witnessing and sealing of the Holy Spirit evidently prove that an assurance of an interest in the love of God may be enjoyed by the saints (Rom. 8. 16; Eph. 1. 13). The latter text evinces the precedency of faith to sealing, as well as expresses this holy persuasion, through the influence of the Spirit upon the mind, as a witness, after believing. And the very same point of doctrine is deducible from His operations as the Spirit of adoption. He enables believers to address God as their Father with boldness, liberty and confidence, through Jesus Christ; and this He doth at some seasons wherein they have the greatest sense of their guilt, pollution and unworthiness.

4. Many of the people of God have expressed their persuasion of an interest in His love and the glorious benefits springing from that fountain. “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” “Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” It would be too tedious to multiply testimonies of this kind, which might be done, for they are very numerous in the Scripture.

Nor is it to be apprehended that this was peculiar to persons inspired, for the Apostle John expresses this matter in the name of Christians in general. “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.” If it is not one main design of that epistle to prove this point, it must be allowed that many things are therein delivered which abundantly confirm it. And this cannot be peculiar to prophets, apostles, or inspired persons, nor arise from inspiration, because some have been inspired who had no faith at all, as Balaam for instance, and holy persons have not always enjoyed it when under inspiration. Inspiration and this holy persuasion, therefore, are distinct things, and the latter does not necessarily attend or arise from the former.

5. I am humbly of the opinion that this great and glorious privilege might be more commonly enjoyed than it is, if professors were wisely

cautious in behaving themselves. It is by no means to be thought that this jewel is to be attained without the diligent use of those means which God hath appointed for our increase and growth in grace: greater self-denial, watchfulness against sin and carnal pleasures, mortification to our worldly interests, with the assiduous practice of religious duties, *viz.*, prayer, reading the Word of God, instead of vain plays, idle romances and empty novels, the fashionable books of our times.

Meditation, and a frequent review of our spiritual experience, and a conscientious attendance on the worship of God, are the appointed means of our advancement in heavenly knowledge. These are things to which many professors discover but little inclination. Let not such, who doubtless must be destitute of this assurance whereof we speak, dream of attaining it in their present frame of mind and course of behaviour; for if they do, their imaginations of this sort will certainly prove deceiving dreams indeed.

6. All believers have a proper and certain evidence within them of their interest in divine favour. Grace in the hearts of the saints is an effect of God's love to them and His gracious purposes concerning them. And therefore, from the being of grace in their souls, they may safely infer that they are objects of divine love and interested in all those blessings which take rise therefrom.

7. Some through causeless fears and jealousies are prevented from enjoying this assurance. They are afraid, because sin is in them as an active and restless principle, that they have no contrary principle of holiness; and because in part they are still carnal, that they are not spiritual persons; because grace is but feebly acted in their minds, that they are void of it; and because for a season they enjoy not strong consolation, that they have no title to it or any spiritual blessings. These jealousies and fears at least evidence a desire of grace, which certainly springs from a gracious principle, for the desire of grace is proper to grace. The want of skill in these persons to distinguish between the motions of the flesh and those of the Spirit, or of attention to both, within themselves, and of a consideration of the new covenant, according to whose nature God will always proceed towards them, are the occasions of their distressing fears.

IV. When this holy assurance is maintained in the souls of believers, it influences them unto a humble and close walk with God. Pride, carnality and neglect of duty are not attendants of the assurance of faith. If lusts, either of the flesh or of the mind are indulged, and a man is careless and negligent in his conversation, let him not imagine that this favour is vouchsafed to him by the blessed Spirit; for when the Spirit of God operates as a Comforter, He also does as a Sanctifier. This strong consolation is never enjoyed without a heavenly constraint upon the mind to love God and cheerfully obey Him.

It is probable that some may mistake in this matter, and take a merely rational conclusion for this assurance, wherein the Holy Spirit has no concern, *viz.*, thus a man reflects upon his past experience of divine goodness, as he thinks, in former seasons, and says within himself, this must have been the work of God upon me; I, therefore, am the subject of His grace and interested in His love. But if he thus reflects and thus reasons, when his condition and the general frame of his mind call loudly upon him to the duties of humiliation and sorrow for sin, spiritual sloth and criminal indulgences, he may assure himself that in this the divine Sanctifier has no concern, and that the conclusion he has drawn contains nothing of that holy assurance in it whereof we now speak.

There is, I think, such a difference between the merely rational actings of our own minds in this business, and the blessed guidance of the Holy Spirit in our reflecting upon His work on our souls, as is easily discernible to the saints; and they are greatly wanting to themselves, with regard to their spiritual peace and solid comfort, if they neglect to attend to that difference in this review of their past acts. In the former, only ease and quiet are sought after, in which consists carnal security; in the latter, strength against sin, and a renewal of the vigour of grace which has fallen under a decay. And present, direct acts of faith are put forth in this latter, which are not in the former.

V. It is our duty to endeavour to obtain it. We ought to be thankful for the lowest measure of faith, but not content ourselves with a low degree of grace, because the being of grace in our hearts, though small, is an evidence of our safety. As far as anything of this nature is found in us, so far we have just cause well to examine ourselves, lest at last we prove mistaken in cherishing hopes of a real conversion. This can be no sign of it, for it is in the nature of the new creature to desire both its preservation and improvement. The neglect hereof can only arise from the flesh, its opposite and combatant. Nothing is more inculcated upon us than this endeavour after an advancement in holiness and spirituality: "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure"; "And, add to your faith virtue," and "let us go on unto perfection"; with various other exhortations of the same kind, which plainly prove that this is a duty indispensably incumbent on us. But alas! we are very defective herein, which is the cause of that slow progress we make in the knowledge of heavenly things, and to this is owing very much that want of the savour and relish of them, which too visibly appears in most professors at this day.

VI. Great advantages attend it. Spiritual peace, which greatly differs from that carnal security that usually is the concomitant of a backsliding frame. Joy in God, which causes us to despise those low and evanid [vanishing] pleasures wherewith our corrupt minds are too apt to

be delighted. Freedom and boldness in our addresses at the throne of grace. Thankfulness and gratitude to our heavenly Father for all the good and inestimable blessings He is pleased to confer upon us. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

This strength of faith will enable us to give glory to God, even under such dispensations as are most trying to it. What difficulties will it not surmount; what afflictions will it not bear with calmness, submission, patience, yea, with triumph? Since such advantages arise to ourselves, and such glory to God from this faith, shall we think anything too hard a labour to attain it, or anything too dear and valuable to part with for its enjoyment? It is our folly if we do.

There is no inconsistency at all between a persuasion of the necessity of a strict and regular attendance to duty, on our part, in order to the enjoyment of a sense of divine favour, and a belief that our growth in grace entirely depends on the efficiency of the Holy Spirit. As to the acknowledgment of the latter, and a steady regard to it as a precious and indubitable truth, I will not give place to any man in the world. But then, on the other hand, I am equally satisfied that it is only in the ways of holiness that any have reason to hope for the benign influences of the Spirit of God, in order to the strengthening and increase of grace in their hearts.

A careless, negligent and loose walk will always be followed with dreadful effects. The bitter weeds, the briars and thorns of corruption of one kind or other will grow, and grace will decline. Sad instances of the truth of this our times abound with. All pretensions unto the present enjoyment of the assurance of faith in those whose conversation is unbecoming the gospel are groundless, if they ever enjoyed that favour. In some, it is to be feared that at last it will appear that they never were by the Holy Spirit sealed unto the day of redemption, notwithstanding all that confidence with which they have expressed themselves.

This is an observation not intended for any who are mourning under a sense of their sins and sinfulness, whatever their revolts may have been through the violence of temptation and the strength of lust stirred up by it. Far be it from me to offer anything which hath the least tendency to break the bruised reed and quench the smoking flax. But the condition of some "that are at ease in Zion" calls for awakening reproof that at least they may not have it to say that they were suffered to go "down to the chambers of death" without any warning given to them of their danger.

Objection.

Some perhaps will say, this doctrine of assurance of safety and security, or a firm persuasion of an interest in Christ and in His salvation,

is not a likely method to promote holiness; for if a man enjoys a certain hope of being happy hereafter, what need he concern himself about the manner of his behaviour? His sins are pardoned, his person is justified, he is an heir of heaven, and his title to eternal life is unalienable; can it, therefore, be expected of him that he should watch, pray and fight, since his future welfare is a thing certain in itself, and he knows it to be so?

Answer

1. Such who thus object are of a different opinion from our Saviour, who plainly told some that their sins were pardoned. "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." And, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." Besides, as He predicted to Peter his denial of Him, He acquainted him with that interest he had in His prevalent intercession: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," and expressly mentions his recovery: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." This objection, therefore, is levelled against the wisdom of our blessed Saviour; and if its force is admitted, it must be at the expense of His want of care about the suitable behaviour of His followers. This is a consideration sufficient entirely to sink the objection and to cause its authors to blush, if they had the least degree of modesty left. But,

2. Who are the persons, that from an assurance of an interest in Christ and in His saving benefits can be supposed, upon that assurance, will grow remiss and careless about the practice of their duty? They must be either unregenerate or regenerate persons. The unregenerate cannot have this assurance, and therefore, they cannot abuse it in the manner the objection supposes. And consequently, if it is thus abused, it must be by regenerate, sanctified men. From what principle in them can this abuse of so precious a favour spring? It must be either from the flesh or from the Spirit. That it cannot arise from the latter is, I suppose, a truth evident to all. And what if the flesh is inclined to abuse this or any other divine truth, is that a sufficient reason for the rejection of it? Surely it is not. He who is insensible that there is that in him which is inclined to take occasion to sin from the commandment in the law, as well as from the promises of the gospel, is a stranger to the plague of his heart. But is it proper, for that reason, to part with either the law or the gospel? Certainly it is not. This is an undoubted truth that that in men which abuses the gospel will also pervert and abuse the law; and therefore if we admit this shameful objection, we can retain neither the law nor the gospel.

3. Since it is only the flesh which can be guilty of thus abusing the doctrine treated of, how absurd is it to imagine that a man can enjoy this assurance while he is pampering and gratifying the flesh? That man deceives himself who is confident of enjoying future happiness, which

consists very much in a perfect freedom from all sin, who allows himself in the present practice of it. I utterly deny that that man desires to be free from sin hereafter, who does not desire to forsake it now. This assurance therefore, cannot in fact give the least encouragement to sin. It is an act of the spiritual part in a believer, which never gives any advantage to the fleshly part in him.

4. It is a sacred truth, and as such it is firmly believed by us, that faith without works is dead. This faith purifies the heart, and it produces good works in the life of him who is the subject of it. How then can this excellent grace be, where the genuine fruits of it are not found? This objection is no better than mere calumny, designed to traduce and reproach a precious, evangelical truth. But this is nothing new nor strange. If some sort of men did not despise, reject and slander divine truths, it would be a strong temptation to me to think myself mistaken in esteeming them such; for the things of the Spirit of God will always be foolishness to some men.

5. Those who thus object, either express the part which they themselves would act upon such a persuasion, or they do not. If they do not, why is it that they object after this manner? If they do, and are in earnest, I am not afraid nor ashamed to tell them that they are strangers to grace and holiness; and if they have no other principle than what at present influences and determines them, nothing is more certain than that they will descend into the bottomless pit, from whence there is no redemption.

That man to whom it would be a satisfaction to continue in sin, upon having an assurance of impunity, most certainly is in the broad road to destruction. He who desires not to be holy now is dreadfully mistaken if he imagines that he desires holiness hereafter. The eternal ruin of such sort of persons, whose real principle this objection expresses, is inevitable, without sovereign grace and mercy work a change in their hearts, and their everlasting damnation will be just. If any pretend unto an assurance of the pardon of their sin, and of the salvation of their souls by the blood and righteousness of Christ, who have no experience of hearty sorrow for sin, indignation against it and against themselves because of their transgressions, they know nothing at all what that holy assurance is. They undoubtedly are “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.”

Some such bold pretenders and impious boasters it may be there are; but their condition is most dreadful, for death, eternal death in fact, can only be expected by them. I am sure that heaven is not their choice, and that they have nothing to look for, but the fiery vengeance of an incensed God. This I know is true, that assurance of pardon through the blood of the Son of God never fails to produce in the mind the greatest abhorrence of sin, and the most earnest desires of its utter destruction.

ANSWER TO ENQUIRY

Is some degree of assurance of salvation (as distinct from a hope) essential in a candidate for church membership through believer's baptism?

How important it is in all that concerns our most holy faith to keep close to the heavenly pattern (Heb. 8. 5)! We have no other standard than the Word of God. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8. 20).

The emphasis in the New Testament is that the candidate for baptism and church membership must be a *believer*. We use the term – *believers' baptism*. Thus:

"He that *believeth* and is baptized ..." (Mk. 16. 16).

"And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, *believed* on the Lord with all his house, and many of the Corinthians hearing *believed*, and were baptized" (Acts 18. 8).

"And the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou *believest* with all thine heart, thou mayest" (Acts 8. 36, 37).

It is clear that this *belief* is not a notional acceptance of the truth or a mere notional acknowledgment that Jesus is the Son of God; the devils have *that* belief (Jas. 2. 19). This *belief* is true faith in the Son of God, a believing to the saving of the soul (Heb. 10. 39). Thus other things are mentioned along with it – repentance (Acts 2. 38), a glad receiving of the Word (Acts 2. 41), the work of the Holy Ghost (Acts 10. 47, 48).

Then the vital thing is: Am I a believer? Do I possess this faith in the Son of God? This is the great question. When this true faith is found, it looks to Jesus, leans hard upon Him, hangs upon His merits, builds upon His righteousness and blood. Its language is:

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

Christ will be precious to the soul – the scriptural mark of a believer (1 Pet. 2. 7) – and love to Him and the saints will be found, for faith worketh by love (Gal. 5. 6). The two great questions to a candidate must be: "What think ye of Christ?" and, "Lovest thou Me?"

So far the position could not be clearer. The candidate must be a *believer*. But the point with many will be (and it would seem to be so with our correspondent): But *am* I a real believer? So the question is asked: "Is some degree of *assurance* of salvation (as distinct from a *hope*) essential for baptism and church membership?"

We feel bound in love to say that there is some inconsistency in the way this question is framed. The question speaks of hope and assurance as two very diverse things, while the Word of God speaks of “the full assurance of hope” (Heb. 6. 11). Here are two things that God has joined together. Though there are degrees of assurance, yet a child of God blessed with full assurance has not got something above hope.

The question really comes to this: Can a person be baptized without *assurance*? That there are degrees of assurance among the godly, no one can doubt. The experience of the saints down the ages witnesses to it. (We are speaking of the fact, not reasons for it.) One of the Puritans, Job Throgmorton (d. 1628), “as holy and as choice a preacher as any in England,” lived thirty-seven years without any comfortable assurance. Others have been as sure of reaching heaven as if already there.* Nowhere does Scripture demand that a person must have *full* assurance before baptism (though full assurance is set before us as a blessing much to be sought after). On the other hand the question must arise: Is it possible for a sinner to be raised up to a sweet hope in Jesus, and yet have *no* assurance? Not a gram? We think not. Surely a good hope through grace must contain *some* degree of assurance, however small. Little hope is not a completely empty vessel; it contains a little assurance at the bottom.

Believing that the question was asked in a humble, tender, gracious spirit (it was accompanied by quite a lengthy letter), we would say to the writer, No one will be able to satisfy you personally but the Lord Himself. Seek that He will make the matter plain, show you your interest in the Son of God, and sweetly constrain you by His love. We feel the right way to follow the Lamb through the waters of baptism is as sweetly drawn by the love of Christ.

One loving word of warning in conclusion. Beware of dictating to God, or (as Huntington once said) “chalking out lines and bidding the Lord walk between.” We wonder if many are held back by this? They will not venture unless the Lord gives a clear word to them to be baptized; they first must hear a minister (without knowing their exercises) preach from some special text; they read of some godly person’s experience, and will not venture until the Lord gives them the very same experience. The Lord is sovereign and will not be dictated to by His creatures.

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* e.g. Toplady: “Nor have I the least doubt of my election, justification and eternal happiness, through the riches of His everlasting and unchangeable kindness to me in Christ Jesus, His co-equal Son.”

THE WHITE DEVIL OF UNBELIEF

By John Bunyan (1628-1688)

This doctrine of coming to Jesus Christ for life informs us of *the evil of unbelief*, that wicked thing that is the only or chief hindrance to the coming sinner. Does the text say, “Come”? Does it say, “And him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out”? Then what an evil that is that keeps sinners from coming to Jesus Christ! And that evil is unbelief: for by faith we come; by unbelief we keep away. Therefore it is said to be that by which a soul departs from God; because it was that which at first caused the world to go away from Him, and that also that keeps them from Him to this day. And it does it the more easily because it does it with deceit.

This sin may be called the white devil, for it often, in its mischievous doings in the soul, shows as if it was an angel of light. Yes, it acts like a counsellor of heaven. Therefore a little to discourse of this evil disease.

1. It is that sin, above all others, that has *some show of reason* in its attempts. For it keeps the soul from Christ by pretending its present unfitness and unpreparedness; such as a need of more sense of sin, a need of more repentance, a need of more humility, a need of a more broken heart.

2. It is the sin that *most fits the conscience*. The conscience of the coming sinner tells him that he has nothing good; that he stands indictable for ten thousand talents; that he is a very ignorant, blind and hard-hearted sinner, unworthy to be once taken notice of by Jesus Christ. “And will you,” says Unbelief, “in such a case as you now are, presume to come to Jesus Christ?”

3. It is the sin that *most fits with our sense of feeling*. The coming sinner feels the workings of sin, of all kinds of sin and wretchedness in his flesh; he also feels the wrath and judgment of God due to sin, and often staggers under it. “Now,” says Unbelief, “you may see you have no grace, for that which works in you is corruption. You may also perceive that God does not love you, because the sense of His wrath abides upon you. Therefore, how can you have the face to come to Jesus Christ?”

4. It is that sin, above all others, that *most fits the wisdom of our flesh*. The wisdom of our flesh thinks it prudent to question awhile, to stand back awhile, to listen to both sides awhile; and not to be rash, sudden or unadvised in too bold a presuming upon Jesus Christ. And this wisdom unbelief agrees with.

5. It is that sin, above all others, that *continually is whispering in the ear of the soul with mistrust of the faithfulness of God*, in keeping promise to them that come to Jesus Christ for life. It also suggests

mistrust about Christ's willingness to receive it and save it. And no sin can do this so cleverly as unbelief.

6. It is also that sin which is *always at hand to enter an objection* against this or that promise that by the Spirit of God is brought to our heart to comfort us. And if the poor, coming sinner is not aware of it, it will, by some evasion, slight, trick or cavil, quickly wrest from him the promise again, and he shall have but little benefit of it.

7. It is that, above all other sins, that *weakens our prayers, our faith, our love, our diligence, our hope and expectations*; it even takes the heart away from God in duty.

8. Lastly, this sin *appears in the soul with so many sweet pretences to safety and security*, that it is, as it were, counsel sent from heaven, telling the soul to be wise, wary, considerate, well-advised, and to take heed of too rash a venture upon believing. Be sure, first, that God loves you; take hold of no promise until you are forced by God to it; neither be sure of your salvation; doubt it still, though the testimony of the Lord has been often confirmed in you. Live not by faith, but by sense; and when you can neither see nor feel, then fear and mistrust, then doubt and question all.

This is the devilish counsel of unbelief, which is so covered over with specious pretences that the wisest Christian can hardly shake off these reasonings.

Indeed, the Christian hath no natural power for these spiritual performances, but God gives him His Spirit for this purpose, that he might be enabled to do sacred duties [religious exercises] with suitable graces. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom. 8. 26). Man is impotent, but the Spirit as an able Assistant "helpeth our infirmities." The word is either an allusion to a nurse, which helps her weak little child to go, so the Spirit affords His hand and helps us to go to God in duties; or, as the composition of the word imports, it is an allusion to those who lift at a weighty piece of timber, too heavy for one alone; one man tugs and pulls hard, but he cannot move it, till one stronger than he comes and helps him; then he bears it away cheerfully. So the Christian, he pulls and hales at his own heavy heart in a duty [religious exercise], to perform the duty aright, and yet makes nothing of it till the Spirit comes and helps him, and then he goes along comfortably through the duty.

As to preaching, there is required external mission, so to every prayer and performance there are required internal motions; therefore we find the "Spirit of grace and of supplications" joined together (Zech. 12. 10). Samson, when his lock was cut off, became like another man; the Christian, when the Spirit withdraweth that grace be not acted, he performeth duties like a carnal man. It is the breath of the Spirit of God in a duty which is so sweet and savoury to God. Gifts may do somewhat as to the outward part of a duty, as a carver may make an image with the external lineaments of a man, but unless grace and spiritual life be in it, it is but the counterfeit, the resemblance of a true duty.

George Swinnock

SONS AND SERVANTS

By Grey Hazlerigg, 1879

Those who partake of the Christian calling are *called to be sons and servants to God and His dear Son Jesus Christ*. Sons and servants at the same time, as Malachi writes: "His own son that serveth him."

To serve God and Jesus is their delight. They can entertain feelingly and heartily the words of one who said, "To serve God is to reign." They are like the freed man in Israel who, having served for his seven years by obligation, was at length made perfectly free, but said, "O, I love my master; I love his house; I will not be made free. Bore my ear to the door-posts of his house; I will still serve him whom I love." So with the saint. "O!" says the freed man of Jesus, "I don't want to serve another. I don't want, Thou sweetest, dearest, loveliest Lord Jesus, to be freed from serving Thee. My pain, my grief is that I cannot serve Thee better. Ah Lord, I long for the time when I shall see Thee up in glory; when my Father's name shall be on my forehead; when I shall be bathed in bliss; and then – then to its fulness shall the promise be fulfilled: 'His servants shall serve Him'! Ah Lord, the hope of this cheers me down below! I love to serve Thee here, and hope to serve Thee for ever. My God, my King, let others serve their lusts, themselves, the world; my desire is to be able more fully to say, 'Other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us: but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name.'"

Thus, then, the saints are called to be Christ's servants.

"Not with the terrors of a slave
Do they perform His will;
But with the noblest powers they have,
His sweet commands fulfil."

David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, blessedly describes how Christ makes a man a servant, and what are the feelings of God's called ones. He cries, "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid." But what made the man so willing, so eager to serve Christ? O he says, it is love, nothing but love, grace, mercy, have wrought this wonder! "Thou hast loosed my bonds." Yes, this is it. When Christ looses the bonds of guilt, and law, and terrors from the heart, then He binds that heart to Him in adamant chains of love.

But we must not suppose that Christ's service upon earth has nothing but ease and comfort about it. O no! Those who serve Christ must serve Him in rough and smooth things, in evil report and good report. They will meet with innumerable oppositions, both from within and without; and therefore, in serving a crucified Saviour, they will only bring forth fruits with patience. As He says, "In your patience possess ye your souls."

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

By Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843)

“And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done (John 11. 43-46).”

I. The raising of dead Lazarus.

1. The time: “When He thus had spoken.” When Jesus first heard that Lazarus was sick, He abode two days in the place where He was. Slowly and calmly He moved toward Bethany, so that when He arrived beneath its fig trees, the passing villager told him that Lazarus had lain in the grave four days already. Still Jesus did not hurry, but waited till He had drawn forth the unbelief of Martha and Mary – waited till He had manifested His own tender, compassionate heart – waited till He had given public thanks to the Father, to show that He was sent of God. “And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.”

His time is the right time. So in giving life to Israel. Israel, like Lazarus, have been lying in their graves eighteen hundred years. Their bones are dry, and very many. Since He spake against them, He earnestly remembers them still; and there is a day coming when He will pour the Spirit of life upon them, and make them come forth, and be life to the dead world. But this in His own time. Jesus does not hurry. He waits till He has drawn out the unbelief of men, and manifested His own tender heart. Then when His time is come, He will cry, Israel, come forth. So in the deliverance of the church – so in the deliverance of individual believers; “For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”

2. The work: “He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes.” What a strange scene was here! It was a retired part of the narrow ravine in which Bethany lies, and the crowd were standing beside the newly-opened sepulchre of Lazarus. It was a cave cut in the rock, and the huge stone that had been rolled to the door was now rolled back. The Jews stood around, wondering what He would do. The hardy peasants of Bethany leaned over the newly-moved stone, and gazed into the dark cave. Martha and Mary fixed their eyes on Jesus, and a deep silence hung upon the group. Opposite the cavern’s mouth stood the Saviour – His tears not yet dried – His eye looking up towards His Father.

“He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!” The hollow cave rang with the solemn sound. The ear of Lazarus was dead and cold, the limbs stiff and motionless, the eyelids closely sealed, and the cold damp of death lay on his forehead; the grave-clothes were round him, and his face bound with a napkin, when the sudden cry, “Lazarus, come forth,” awoke the dead. It pierced down into the deep cave, and through the close, damp napkin into the dead ear. The heart began suddenly to beat, and the warm current of life to flow through the dead man’s veins. The vital heat and the sense of hearing came back. It was a well-known voice. “The voice of my Beloved,” he would say; “He calls my name.”

So he arose: “And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes.” How simple, and yet how glorious! Jehovah speaks, and it is done. “The voice of the Lord is powerful: the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.” Now were the words of Christ fulfilled: “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.” Christ manifested forth His glory as the resurrection and the life.

i. The resurrection. This is the way in which Christ will raise all that have died in the Lord. “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5. 28, 29). There is a day near at hand in which every dead ear shall hear the same voice crying, Come forth! Come forth!

Learn not to sorrow over departed believers as those who 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.” The dust of Lazarus was dear to Jesus; He would not leave it in the rocky tomb. So is the dust of every Lazarus dear in His sight. He will not lose so much as one of them. Wherever they lie, it matters not – beneath the green sward, or beneath the deep blue sea, or on some distant battlefield, or consumed in flame and smoke – the Lord Jesus will yet collect their scattered dust, and make them like His own glorious body.

Learn not to fear the grave. There is nothing that we naturally shrink back from more than the grave. Ah! it is a fearful thing to leave the company of living men, and lie down in the narrow house, with a shroud for our only clothing, a coffin for our couch, and the worm for our companion. It is humiliating – it is loathsome. But if you are one of Christ’s, here is the victory: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put

on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15. 52-55). Fix your eye on Jesus at the grave of Lazarus; so will He stand over the grave of a sleeping world, and cry, "Come forth!"

O Christless man! you too will hear that voice – your soul will hear it in hell – your body will hear it in the grave; and death and hell will give up the dead which are in them. You will not hear His voice now, but you must hear it then. You will come forth, like Lazarus, and stand before God. Perhaps you would like to lie still in the grave. O let the rocks fall on me, and the mountains cover me! Perhaps you will cling to the sides of the grave, and clasp your frail coffin in your arms. Perhaps your soul would wish to lie still in hell. O let me alone – let the burning wave go over me for ever – let the worm gnaw and never die. But you must come forth to the resurrection of damnation – you must rise to shame and everlasting contempt.

ii. He manifested Himself as the life. This is the way in which Christ gives life to dead souls. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5. 25). The soul of the unconverted among you is as dead to divine things as the body of Lazarus was to common things. There is a total death in every unconverted bosom. It is not a mere figure of speech. It is not figurative death, but real – as real as that of Lazarus. Your eye does not see divine things, your ear does not hear them, your heart does not feel them. It is the voice of Christ that wakens the dead soul. Jesus speaks through the Bible, through ministers, through providences. His voice can reach the dead. He quickeneth whom He will. They that hear live....

Learn where to look for spiritual life. It was not the voice of Mary, nor the voice of Martha, nor the voice of the Jews, that raised dead Lazarus. They could roll away the stone, but they could do no more. They could not raise the dead. It was the voice of Immanuel, of Him who is the life of all that live. So it is still, dear friends. It is His voice alone that can awaken you. It is not my voice, nor that of your loving Marthas and Marys – it must be the voice of Jesus, or you will sleep on and die in your sins; and where Christ has gone you will never come. Many a time the voice of ministers has rung through this house, and through your ears, and you have lived on in sin. But when the voice of Christ speaks through the Word, then you will arise, and leave all, and follow Him.

II. The effect on the bystanders.

1. Many believed on Him. It was a happy day in Bethany. He turneth the shadow of death into the morning. Martha and Mary had

their bitter grief turned into a song of praise. Their buried brother was once more restored to their arms safe and sound, and I can imagine the feelings with which they sang that evening at their family worship: "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

Another joy was this: all their unbelief was now cleared away; Christ was like a morning without clouds. His tarrying, His promise, His trial of them – all was now explained, and as Mary sat at His feet that evening and heard His words, she felt more than ever that it was impossible for Christ to lie. But a greater joy still remained: "Many of the Jews believed on Him." It was a birth-night for eternity. The Shepherd found some lost sheep that night. The voice that called Lazarus forth pierced many a heart. The cottage at Bethany would be like a little heaven that night.

Observe what made them believe: "When they saw the things that Jesus did." It was not the sight of one thing, but of all that Jesus did; just as the dying thief believed on Christ, not from seeing one thing but all that Jesus did. When he saw His holy Person, His calmness, His love, His pity, he could not but feel that this was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. So with these Jews. They saw the amazing love of Jesus to Lazarus, and Martha and Mary, they saw His tears, they heard His groans, they saw Him thank and praise His Father, and they could not but believe on Him.

Two things especially they saw – divine power, and divine love to sinners. It is the same thing which persuades sinners now to believe on Him. It is seeing such love in Him that He is willing to save, and such power that He is able. And O how happy it would make us if many of you believed on Him! – if you were constrained this day to lay hold on Him as your Surety, elder Brother, and Friend!

2. Some went and told the Pharisees. Some were saved and some were hardened.

i. Their companions were saved, yet they were not. They left Jerusalem [Bethany?] together, strangers to God and to conversion. Some were taken, and some were left. So it is ever. I have often thought when sinners have been stricken and saved in this place, surely their neighbours will be saved also. Often it is the very reverse. Are there not many of you that have been hardened, while others have been saved by your side?

ii. They loved Martha and Mary, and yet were not saved, but hated Christ. They were friends of Martha and Mary; they seem even to have loved Mary best – and yet they did not love Christ. So it is now. Some among you love our Marthas and Marys, and yet do not love Christ. Ah, those whom you love will soon be eternally separated from you!

iii. Their objections were answered, and yet they were not saved. "Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" They objected that His love was not true, or He would not have suffered Lazarus to drop into the grave. Here their objection is taken away. Lazarus is raised, so that it is proved to them that Jesus loved him. Their mouth is shut. Still they do not turn. Alas! it is the same still. Many say, If I knew that Christ were willing to receive me, I would come. Remove the objection, still they do not come. If I had clothes, if I were free from family cares, I would begin to care about my soul. Still, remove the objection, and they are careless as ever.

iv. They hated Christ, the more they saw of Him. Not only did they not believe on Him, but they went and told His deadly enemies – went and plotted His destruction. Ah, this is almost incredible! What a diabolical heart is a natural heart! Not only do you refuse to be saved by Christ, but you hate His name and cause. "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed."

AUDREY

Written by her mother, a member of the church at Staplehurst, Kent.

*Mr. Robert Field knew Mrs. Morris well, and esteemed her
as a gracious lady*

My younger daughter, Audrey Malvina Morris, was born at Birmingham in February 1919, and passed away at Frittenden on July 17th, 1930, aged eleven years. She had every appearance of being a strong child, but when three years old, after recovering from an illness, the doctor said she would need much care.

As Audrey grew older and began to understand things, she would often say, "Where is my daddy?" and when I replied, "Daddy has gone to live with Jesus in heaven," Audrey asked, "Shall we live with Jesus, mamma?" We often sang the well-known hymn beginning, "I think when I read that sweet story of old," which dear Audrey so enjoyed, and after a time would sing it alone.

When old enough Audrey went to school for about three years. She was fond of her school friends, and won the esteem of her teachers by her sweet disposition. She was much interested in Scripture lessons, and would often mention little pieces, one text especially, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," I remember. She was often reading her Bible, and was very fond of the Book of Ruth, also the twenty-third Psalm. One hymn she would sing:

“There’s a Friend, for little children above the bright blue sky,”; another was: “All things bright and beautiful.”

She would ask questions on divine things, which I felt to need wisdom to answer to one so young. Always ready to go to Staplehurst Chapel with us, Audrey would listen attentively during services, and on her return home would sit on my lap and ask questions and talk of what she remembered of the services. Once she quoted what our pastor, Mr. Kirby, said in prayer, which was; “O to be nothing, *nothing*; only at His feet to lie.”

Our pastor called a little before Christmas 1927, and Audrey being very poorly, he suggested calling in the doctor, which was done; and I was soon acquainted with the sad news that she had diabetes, and that it was a hospital case which needed immediate treatment. To go away from home into Guy’s Hospital was a great trial to her. On the Sunday, while waiting for a bed, she asked us all to sing one of her favourite hymns, which was: “Keep silence, all created things.”

Audrey entered the hospital on December 29th, 1927. She was much distressed, saying, “I shall die, mamma”; and, “I want to stay with you.” I told Audrey when visiting her that our pastor prayed for her to get better, and she said it was kind of him, adding, “I pray to come home, mamma.” I stayed on two occasions part of Sunday evening in the hospital with her. During one Sunday service held there, “Peace, perfect peace,” was sung, which Audrey much enjoyed. At another service the minister asked her to choose a hymn, which she did, her choice being, “God moves in a mysterious way.”

After nine weeks in hospital she was allowed to return home, and as soon as we were in the train she said, “You will take me to hear Mr. Kirby on Sunday”; but much to my regret, I was unable to do so. The spring of 1928 was warm, and the doctor said she could go to chapel for half a day, but when a little stronger she stayed for both services. One text she remembered and marked in her Bible: “Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace ... for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.” Audrey was much tried about her soul at times and depressed, and would say she wished that she had been a little bird; at other times she would be singing, and would often say, “But God knows all we do.” I devoted much time and spent many happy hours with her. She was fond of good books, and understood what she read. When getting ready to go to Frittenden Chapel one Sunday evening, Audrey said, “Are you taking me to hear that man preach ‘Blessings on your head?’” The preacher was Mr. John Kemp, senior, whom she had heard before. She liked to go to Frittenden, too, when Mr. Dawson supplied, and would say, “I like Mr. Dawson. He said, ‘Oh that Thou wouldest enlarge my coast!’” Audrey also liked doing Mr. Dawson’s Scripture Exercises in the *Gleaner*.

I asked her one day if she still said her baby prayers, and she said, "One, mamma; but I make them as I go along." "I do ask Jesus to make me good, but we are all sinners." When very low she would say, "Mamma; I keep praying to Jesus to make me better, and Jesus doesn't listen to me. I am not going to pray any more; it's no good."

Early Easter Sunday, 1929, dear Audrey had a very sharp attack, and her doctor said she would not get better. When she questioned me, I told her we did not know how long she would be spared to us, but we would still pray for her recovery. From this time Audrey was subject to sharp attacks, usually in the early hours of the morning. Often tried and depressed, one Sunday morning Audrey was in her room weeping, and when asked what was the matter, she said, "I feel so sad." Later in the morning we missed her, and after a search found her in a field close by, behind a tree, weeping; and at another time she was found in a lodge in the same condition. At those times Audrey would ask to be left alone. On August bank holiday, 1929, I took her in her chair to the woods, and sat there reading Huntington's *Bank of Faith* to her. She would say, "Go on reading, mamma, I do like this book," wiping her tears away at the same time.

As time passed, Audrey was strengthened and attended chapel again, and one Sunday remarked on the reading, Matthew 5. 10. Another Sunday I noticed her reading Hymn 802 [the hymn on Gethsemane] through; this was a favourite of hers, especially verse 20.* She had various kind friends, and much appreciated their kindness to her, especially one friend who came and read to her and took her out in her chair. At times Audrey got very weary, and would say, "There is nothing to live for"; and also, "I don't expect I shall ever grow up; do you, mamma?" A short time before her death, she was talking about flowers, and said, "If I die, mamma, I would like some lilies put on my grave, for Jesus sends all the beautiful flowers." Her last walk was among the tombstones in the churchyard.

Audrey attended chapel on Sunday, July 6th, and having an opportunity of going to Grafty Green in the evening (our pastor supplying there), she wanted to go. She much enjoyed the service, and remarked when home that, "It was nice tonight." During the following week she did not seem herself, but very happy. Early Saturday morning the dear little girl had a sharp attack which kept her in bed all day, and she took very little notice of anyone. On Sunday morning her condition

*"Sins against a holy God;
Sins against His righteous laws;
Sins against His love, His blood;
Sins against His name, and cause;
Sins immense as is the sea –
Hide me, O Gethsemane!"

was much the same, and she took nothing but water. Later in the day sickness came on, and late in the evening we fetched the doctor, who said Audrey was very ill. At midnight the poor little girl was in terrible pain; the doctor sent a sleeping draught, which took no effect. During the early hours of the morning we had great difficulty in keeping her in the bed, her pains were so violent. I tried to tell her that Jesus would not lay on her more than she was able to bear, but she said, "You don't know, mamma! I do feel ill!" After an injection she was quieter, and said, "I feel a little better now." Shortly after she became comatose [in a state of coma], and remained so the greater part of Monday.

On Tuesday, Audrey was very ill, and her thirst was dreadful to witness; but the doctor said she might pull through. She begged of me not to leave her, and when able would talk a little. She enquired if our pastor had been to see her, and was told that he had, but she was fast asleep. When asked if she would like him to be fetched, she said, "Not now, but I shall think about him." Then she said, "Are we going to have that hymn?" but I could not suggest the right one. The doctor ordered her milk and soda and ice. Audrey said, "Do you think I shall get through now I am taking more?" I said, "Darling, do you feel ready to die?" She replied, "I would like to live with you a little longer." On Wednesday, Audrey was very weak, but so peaceful, and repeated two verses of hymn 267. She expressed a wish to see her sister Grace, who was sent for to come quickly.

About 4 p.m., leaving my sister in the room, I went downstairs, but in a few minutes was called to her bedside. She said, "I can't stay here any longer! Take me out of bed, mamma." I took her out, when she said, "Pray for me." As best I could I tried to pray aloud, but Audrey said, "Not like that, mamma. That is not what I want." I then went on to ask that Jesus would entwine His everlasting arms around her and take her to heaven, after which she gave me such a sweet smile. I then said, "Shall I read the twenty-third Psalm, or shall we have a hymn?" Audrey said, "A hymn, please, mamma." I said, "Jesus, Lover of my soul?" She said, "Yes; sing it, mamma." After trying to sing the first verse, she said, "Put me back into bed," which I did. I then read the second verse, and upon reaching the line, "All my trust on Thee is stayed," she raised her little hand and said, "That's it, mamma;" and for a little time lay quiet and peaceful.

I said, "Do you feel ready to die and live with Jesus, Audrey, dear? Will you make a sign if you feel Jesus very near?" She said, "I will try, mamma." A short time she lay gazing at the ceiling, then she said, "What's that, mamma?" and suddenly raised herself up in bed, looking up to the ceiling, and holding her arms above her head, clasping her hands together. I took her and carefully laid her down, and the doctor

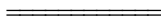
coming in then said Audrey was sinking, and would not live the night. Her sister and two brothers having arrived, Audrey asked to see them, kissed us all goodbye, tried hard to make the lady doctor and me understand something, but being so weak could not. At 8.30 p.m. she went into a coma, and in the early hours of Thursday opened her eyes and said, "Mamma!" which was her last word spoken. Dear Audrey lingered on, and peacefully breathed her last at midday on Thursday, July 17th, to dwell with Jesus for ever.

Her mortal remains were laid to rest in "sure and certain hope" on Monday, July 21st, 1930, in Frittenden Churchyard, after a service at the chapel. Our pastor, Mr. Kirby, officiated, and in speaking of the departed, referred to Isaiah 65. 20, "The child shall die an hundred years old," and remarked that he had lost one of his best hearers. During the service one of Audrey's favourite hymns was sung: "Children of the heavenly King" (Gadsby's 267). Four friends from Staplehurst Chapel kindly acted as bearers.

Their pastor, the esteemed Frederick Kirby, wrote:

I am pleased to bear my testimony to the genuineness of a work of grace in the heart of our dear young friend. She delighted in the services of God's house, and was always most attentive, and being favoured with a fairly good memory, she carried home with her some things she had heard, and would converse with her mother respecting them from time to time. It was a pleasure to visit her, and to observe the work of grace deepening in her heart. She was bright, cheerful, thoughtful of others, and loving to those around her. At the same time one could observe the weaning from the things of time that was going on within; her countenance at times, especially toward the end, expressed the solemn exercises of her soul.

Her dear mother's account is so faithfully recorded that I feel it cannot be improved upon. The dear one is now in glory with her precious Jesus, whom she loved to hear about as she passed through this vale of tears. If those who read this little account feel in reading it as I was favoured to, their eyes will be moist and their hearts soft, and praise will ascend to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.



Meditation on our sins helpeth in confession; meditation on our wants helpeth in petition; meditation on our mercies helpeth in thanksgiving. A Christian ought to keep a catalogue, at least in the table-book of his heart, of these three particulars.

George Swinnock

SYMPATHY IN AFFLICTION

Letter from Robert Roberts to Thomas Charles. See page 26.

Dear Brother,

When I received the letter which your dear wife wrote to me just after you had been under the hands of the surgeon, I was then certain that I would have visited you before now, but I was disappointed. Instead of coming to Bala to visit my dear friend, I was diverted to the school of affliction, where I have been these last six weeks, and the Teacher in whose hands I am has made me go over many of my old lessons, such as believing, repenting, self-denying, loving God and loving His people, etc.

It is remarkable how many disappointments I am discovering in myself! When looking at these lessons from afar, I am ready to believe that I am a sufficient master of them all, but on drawing near to them and engaging with them I find myself a poor creature indeed – failing to believe, failing to love, failing to deny myself. And in the light of all this failure I grieve over my poor condition and find no place for my consolation, undeserving wretch, except that there is place for a sinner to hope before a Mediator. Indeed, I find life for myself at this door. O how sweet is the word that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, yes, the chiefest of sinners! When I find sufficient strength to crawl to that point, in the face of all my failures, I see everything falling into place.

What an amazing thing to be supplied for poor sinners is a great Mediator! He is my soul's only confidence for eternal life. To know that Christ Jesus receives sinners gives me greater assurance of my salvation than if I heard men and angels proclaiming together that I am a true believer. As I hide my guilty head under the wing of my dear Jesus, I know that this work proceeds in my soul, namely, to reconcile me more and more to the plan of salvation.

Up to now I have been nothing but a troublesome pilgrim in this sad world. No sooner am I enabled to worship a little and to delight myself in the Lord, leaning as it were upon the top of my staff, than it is time to run to fulfil some duty in the wilderness. But I have been thinking lately that all my unshapely limbs are close to falling on to that bed of ivory, that glorious plan of the Trinity to save man. And when I am here given an occasional rest, all the tumult of the cares of livelihood and a diseased body disappear and I then see everything clearly and in its right place...

Well, my dear friend, I am sorry to trouble you by attempting to express my thoughts in such a disorderly way, but I trust you will forgive me and accept these lines as a token of love. And how glad would I be to receive one letter from my dear Charles. If you are able, let me hear from you, because I have no hope of seeing you (if I live) for a very long time.

I am beginning to recover a little from this recent attack. I spoke in the chapel yesterday. There were signs that the gracious Lord was amongst us as we fasted. Let us hope that we shall never see the days when the glory has departed from our congregations. O for help to cry, "Never leave Thy people," etc.

I expect my brother John to be with you shortly enquiring for Bibles. It will be a mercy for our neighbourhood if you are able to supply some for us. Remember me kindly to your dear wife. My own wife desires to be remembered to you. I ask to be remembered by you before the throne of grace.

Who am, your undeserving friend,

Robert Roberts

Clynnog, February 14th, 1801

BOOK REVIEWS

The Calvinistic Methodist Fathers of Wales, translated by John Aaron; two volumes; hardback; 800 and 816 pages; price £40 for both; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Volume 2

Reviewing Volume 1 last month, we said how interesting and spiritually profitable we found it to be, and how we were looking forward to reading Volume 2. We were not disappointed.

Volume 2 is different. It deals more with the north of Wales, and there are more (to us) unknown ministers and men. Again the book deals with the story of the Calvinistic Methodists largely from a biographical point of view – though there is the account of how the Calvinistic Methodists eventually formally separated from the Church of England.

The two leading ministers to appear in the book are the well-known Thomas Charles (1755-1814) and John Elias (1774-1841). In connection with Thomas Charles, we were pleased to read a short account of "Mary Jones and her Bible," especially as this was written not too long after her death and when there were people still alive who knew her – this making the account completely authentic. Also, it was interesting to read of a second, similar case to Mary Jones.

Six years ago we reviewed an account of the atonement controversy in Wales. Between 1707 and 1841 there was fierce controversy among the Nonconformists of Wales concerning the exact meaning of "particular redemption." It is amazing to think of the varied opinions there were among professed Calvinists. All this comes out again in the account of Thomas Jones of Denbigh. We would not agree with the opposition to what was termed "Hyper-Calvinism." On the other hand we find the minister John Williams (1754-1828 – son of William Williams the hymnwriter) delighting in Dr. Gill:

"When I am at home I spend most of my time reading the Bible and Dr. Gill's comments. I love to follow Dr. Gill wherever he leads, except down to the river [meaning believers' baptism]. Whoever takes pains over the Doctor's

works will be well rewarded for his trouble, and will receive as much useful knowledge in my opinion, as if he read all the books that were ever written" (page 228).

Of special interest is Robert Roberts of Clynnog, who died at the age of 40 in 1802. He was very afflicted, even deformed, but as an eminent preacher was wonderfully used by God. Typical of his preaching (and that of many of his contemporaries) is the emphasis on Calvary and its intimate connection with the covenant. For instance:

"Many conditions pertain to the covenant of grace and none of them will be broken. The conditions of the covenant of works were laid on the earthy shoulders of Adam, and they were all broken. But every condition of the covenant of grace was laid on the shoulders of the Godhead. 'I have made a covenant with My chosen ... I have laid help upon One that is mighty.' The covenant of works was like a bridge, with one end on rock and the other end on earth. The earth fell and the bridge came down. But the covenant of grace is a bridge built upon the rock at both ends. God is here undergirding the whole. Christ walked in deep communion with the moral law from His birth to Calvary and He there obtained the last word: 'Christ is the end of the law.' He became its full accomplishment, in its demands and its curses. The ceremonial law had carried Christ in her womb for long – in the desert, in the tabernacle, in Solomon's temple, in Zerubbabel's temple – and whilst giving birth to Him, she died. The substance became the death of His shadowy mother and I think that her grave lies beneath the cross."

A letter of sympathy he wrote (see page 24) will give our readers an idea of the spiritual value of the book.

All in all we found this a most profitable book. Perhaps if one thing stands out, it is the godliness of the ministers and men mentioned – known and unknown. Christ was their All in all, and their religion was the one thing that mattered in their lives.

Memories of Sandfields, by Bethan Lloyd-Jones; paperback; 104 pages; price £5.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Much interest was shown in this book when it first appeared twenty-five years ago. It is an account of a spiritual work in Aberavon in Wales in the 1920s and 1930s.

There are vivid sketches of one or two terrible characters whose lives were transformed by the grace of God. As the Publishers say: some of the poor of this world became rich in faith.

The interesting point is that however vile the character was, when grace touched his heart he was delivered from his old sins. The grace that saves always sanctifies.

From Grief to Glory, by James W. Bruce; paperback; 214 pages; price £6.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Sub-titled, "Spiritual Journeys of Mourning Parents," this book was written following the loss of a little child.

From Grief to Glory tells of how so many of the servants of God have walked this pathway, and how the Lord helped and upheld them. These include

Bunyan, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Matthew Henry, Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, Lady Huntingdon and Dr. Owen. There are quotations from Rutherford's letters and the writings of John Flavel.

Very sad, touching and tenderly written, under God's blessing this book could be a help and comfort to grieving parents (though we felt one or two personal comments would have been better left out).

PRAISE FOR BLESSINGS IN PROVIDENCE AND GRACE

Almighty Father, gracious Lord,
Kind Guardian of my days,
Thy mercies let my heart record
In songs of grateful praise.

In life's first dawn, my tender frame
Was Thy indulgent care,
Long ere I could pronounce Thy name,
Or breathe the infant prayer.

When reason with my stature grew,
How weak her brightest ray!
How little of my God I knew!
How apt from Thee to stray!

Around my path what dangers rose!
What snares spread all the road!
No power could guard me from my foes,
But my Preserver, God.

When life hung trembling on a breath,
'Twas Thy almighty love
That saved me from impending death,
And bade my fears remove.

How many blessings round me shone
Where'er I turned my eye!
How many passed almost unknown,
Or unregarded, by.

Each rolling year new favours brought
From Thy exhaustless store:
But ah! in vain my labouring thought
Would count Thy mercies o'er.

While sweet reflection, through my days,
Thy bounteous hand would trace,
Still dearer blessings claim my praise,
The blessings of Thy grace.

Yes, I adore Thee, gracious Lord,
For favours more divine;
That I have known Thy sacred Word,
Where all Thy glories shine.

'Tis here I view with pleasing pain
How Jesus left the sky,
(Almighty love! surprising scene!)
For man, lost man, to die.

When blest with some transporting view,
That Jesus died for me,
For this sweet hope what praise is due,
O God of grace, to Thee!

And may I hope that Christ is mine?
That source of every bliss,
That noblest gift of love divine –
What wondrous grace is this!

My highest praise, alas, how poor!
How cold my warmest love!
Dear Saviour, teach me to adore
As angels do above.

But frail mortality in vain
Attempts the blissful song;
The high, the vast, the boundless strain
Claims an immortal tongue.

Lord, when this mortal frame decays,
And every weakness dies,
Complete the wonders of Thy grace,
And raise me to the skies.

Then shall my joyful powers unite,
In more exalted lays,
And join the happy sons of light
In everlasting praise.

Anne Steele (1717-1778)

“If while I am sleeping in the silent grave my thoughts are of any real benefit to the meanest of the servants of my God, be the praise ascribed to the Almighty Giver of all grace.”

Anne Steele

Private prayer crowns God with the honour and glory that is due to His name; and God crowns private prayer with a discovery of those blessed weighty truths to His servants that are a sealed book to others.

Thomas Brooks

OBITUARY

Eunice Grace Field, member of the church at Grove Road, Eastbourne, passed away peacefully in the Hove Bethesda Home on July 3rd, 2008, aged 98.

Our friend worshipped in Salem Chapel, Carshalton, with her husband Ben. They were baptized together at Salem and joined the church there on December 5th, 1937. Here her soul was instructed and blessed under her pastor, Mr. Samuel Stevens, and her soul quickened into life. She had a special time of blessing under her pastor's ministry when he preached from Matthew 28. 18 ("All power is given unto Me"), which raised her to a hope in Christ, and Christ was made very precious to her soul at that time. Her soul was fed under her pastor's ministry. She was a member there for over fifty years.

In 1985, Mr. E. Moore preached from John 15. 16 ("Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you"), when she had a renewal of the love of Christ to her soul with power. On Christmas Eve 1985 she went to bed and was reading from Mr. John Gosden's memoirs, and read how he too was favoured with John 15. 16, when she again was favoured to be filled with the love of Christ, accompanied by hymn 1032, especially verse 3. By now it was Christmas morning; she lay awake until 2 a.m., filled with love to Christ.

In May 1987 Mr. Ernest Saunders, now a deacon, read John 15. At verse 16, again love to Christ filled her soul. The truth in John 15. 16 was so evidently made special to her.

Again in May 1987 one of God's servants preached from Matthew 28. 18, when she had a renewal of blessing which she had known over fifty years before through her pastor, Mr. Samuel Stevens. Christ was again made very precious. Her husband Ben Field died in March 1989, which meant that she began to need to have a home to be looked after. She was favoured to move to Eastbourne in 1990 to live with her daughter Mary and husband John, who lovingly cared for her over the next fifteen years until she needed care in the Hove Bethesda Home, where she was also lovingly cared for.

Her first service at Grove Road Chapel, Eastbourne, the text was Psalm 121. 8. This was made special to her. Our friend sought membership at Eastbourne in 1991. Her testimony was well received – a lady who knew well the plague of her own heart, and her interest in Christ. She gave her testimony in July 1991 and was received into the church at Eastbourne in September 1991.

During the first three years at Eastbourne she was often favoured in her soul. She kept a diary at that time and often spoke of times of blessing. She was a good hearer. She was especially favoured through hearing her son Richard, and by him received the anointing for her burial. The first was in the Coppice Chapel in November 1991. His text was Hebrews 11. 16 ("But now they desire a better country"). This was renewed again at Bodle Street by her son Richard in August 1993, when again the text was Hebrews 11. 16; also Richard quoted John 14. 1-3, which was made hers more than once in the years that followed. Her son David preaching at Eastbourne mentioned John 15. 16. She said this once again broke her hard heart.

The last three years of her life were spent at Hove Bethesda Home. She had become stone deaf, but often responded to the Word of God or hymns.

Her large family often visited her and had sweet moments together. I too was favoured in visiting, when for the most part I tried to remind her of what the

Lord had done for her and often received lovely smiles. We were favoured to have her at Grove Road for her last seventeen years. "The memory of the just is blessed."

I was favoured to be with her the last day of her life, when two of her daughters and her eldest son were there. The Bethesda staff were so good to her and with her. I believe they loved having her with them.

The funeral service was held in Tamworth Road Strict Baptist Chapel, Croydon, on July 18th, 2008. The interment was at Bandon Hill Cemetery, Wallington.

S.M.

Her son Richard wrote in March 2004: "I have checked through my diaries, and the other occasion which I have spoken to you about was on Monday evening, November 11th, 1991, when I had preached from this same text (Heb. 11. 16) at the Coppice chapel. After this service we brought her home with us, and we had not been travelling very long when she said to me, 'Well my boy, you have been preaching to your mother tonight, and I feel that I have received the anointing for my burial.'"

In a letter dated September 6th, 1993, to her son Richard, she wrote:

"I thought you would like to know, Richard, that your preaching at Bodle Street I felt was for me. As you know, I had difficulty in hearing at West Street and Ripley, but at Ripley, when you quoted, 'In My Father's house,' etc., when you came to, 'Where I am, there ye may be also,' it entered into me. Well now, at Bodle Street I felt you preached the longings and desires of my heart, and as you went along, so I went along with you, but I felt so unworthy: just a lump of sin – and I said, 'Lord, is this really for me? If it is, do let Richard repeat that text as he did at Ripley,' and before you finished you repeated the text. Now I felt it to be a wonderful privilege for son to preach to mother and would give Him all the praise."

The following are extracts from her diaries:

"December 24th, 1985. Went to bed about 10.30. Had been reading J.H. Gosden's memoirs and he writes of being favoured with the text, 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen thee.' Same text as I felt so favoured when Mr. E. Moore was with us in July the first Sunday, and it brought the same love and power that I felt so favoured once again. Then these came: 'I've bound thee up secure.' I knew where to find them and put the light on without waking Dad, and the whole hymn was made good to me. I lay for some time and thought it was Christmas morning and wondered if this was really the day Christ was born, and felt how wonderful Christ should be born, and what love to come and redeem His people, to suffer, bleed and die, and felt such love fill my heart that I never went to sleep before 2 a.m., but that love did not quite leave me all over the Christmas.

"January 14th, 1992. Had been out for a walk with Mary, and on return we could not open the front door. Mary went to the next-door neighbour for help. Whilst she was gone a voice seemed to say within me, 'Pray about it.' So I did, and then I put the key in the door again and it opened. So once again I was reminded, 'My life's minutest circumstance is subject to His eye.'

"January 22nd, 1992. Pastor's text was Joshua 3. 13. He was very helped, and I was encouraged too; spoke so well of my feelings. Has been a great concern to me: is my name in the book of life? Assured this evening that it is and

how my feelings in wanting another token were described. Altogether it was a good sermon; I only wish I could retain it better.

"March 8th, 1992. Went to chapel again after being in for two weeks. During that time I felt so dark, vile – a real, black sinner. I did hope if I was real that there may be a crumb for me today. It was good to be in the house of God again. The third hymn, number 24 verse 3 ("Assure my conscience"), was what I needed. In the evening Pastor traced out to me just my feelings during the days I was in, and said this is the pathway of a living soul. I really felt to come out of that darkness.

"March 10th, 1992. Reading *More Handfuls of Purpose*. Mr. T. so confirmed Pastor's preaching on Sunday. He said, 'The Lord will touch you, shed abroad His love in your heart, favour you with a sweet smile, and you will know what resurrection is, and you will go on your way rejoicing.' And that is how I feel, though this is the third anniversary of Ben's death.

"April 17th, 1992 (Good Friday). Dicker. Mr. M. preached. Spoke very much on one being reviled but not reviling again, speaking of Christ, but it was the first hymn that broke me, 785 [on the crucifixion], particularly the second verse. I had never had such a strong feeling like it before. It was Christ suffering for all my sins, and I felt such sorrow.

"April 19th, 1992. I did ask the Lord that He would make this a special Easter day. Before going to chapel I had read hymn 441 ("So fair a face bedewed with tears") and felt a softening of heart, and when I arrived at the chapel, on the hymn board was 441 as the last hymn. This I felt as a little confirmation. Pastor was helped in tracing out the pathway, and then the crucifixion and how souls came to the church through baptism, being buried with Christ and rising to a new life, and how it is a soul's desire to live and serve the Lord, and coming to old age, how the prayers of the aged are valued. Altogether I felt it to be a good day.

"June 21st, 1992. Sunday School anniversary. Pastor spoke to the children. I thought, 'Well, I am not beyond that yet.' Hymn 185 from the *Young People's Hymn Book* [on Ruth gleaning] was sung in the morning. I had never seen the hymn before, but it got right into my heart. I felt these are the very things I want to know now.

"July 12th, 1992. Mr. Mercer not well; reading services morning and evening. Early in morning, looking back in my life and wondering if after all I was deceived, hymn 376 came to my mind, verse 6 and the last two lines: 'After so much mercy past, canst Thou let me sink at last?' This was the last hymn in the evening.

July 26th, 1992. Had a sweet time early this morning in reading Mr. Ramsbottom's [25th Anniversary] book. He speaks about being led out to Bethany, and says Bethany was a place of love, and so I felt I had received nothing but love since moving to Eastbourne. Beginning with dear Mary and John, they have shown such loving kindness to me, and Pastor, and the friends at Eastbourne as well. Then Psalm 121. 8, this was made so good to me before going to chapel. We were late as the car would not start, but first hymn was 686; then Pastor read from 1 John 2. 24 onwards, to the end of chapter 4. So much of the reading was on the love of Christ, and I felt I had a little of that love in my heart. Hymns 1070, 983 and 1013 were also sung and Pastor had much liberty in preaching both morning and evening; text was Psalm 133; altogether it was a good day.

“September 20th, 1992. A day of thanksgiving at the chapel, and how great are the Lord’s mercies to unworthy me. It really was a day of praise. Text: 1 Chron. 16. 28, 29.

“January 3rd, 1993. It has been such a long time since I felt a soft heart, a touch of His love. Pastor’s text was Luke 22. 19, 20. He was helped morning and evening. In the evening he spoke about coming to the Lord’s table and eating and drinking unworthily. O I felt, ‘How can I go and sit there tonight?’ But then Pastor spoke of a soul who had felt the same, and she said she went to the table remembering her Lord, but she said, ‘But do remember me, Lord,’ and that is just how I felt and I went and sat at the table. Pastor preached so clearly of the judgment hall, Gethsemane, and the cross, but how little if anything did I feel to know. When I sat down at the table and bowed my head, I never had any words, but my heart was made soft and I felt it to be full of the love of Christ. Inwardly I sat and wept, though I tried to show nothing on the outside. I should have liked to have gone from the table to my bed, but this is impossible. I felt how good this was to begin the year, but wonder what lies ahead.

“July 4th, 1993. Felt very comfortable all day. Pastor’s text was John 19. 30: ‘When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar,’ etc. Spoke mostly in the evening of the sufferings of Christ, and how little I felt to know anything about these sufferings. At the Lord’s table Pastor spoke of a special time he had himself and how it renewed to me once at Carshalton at the Lord’s table, and the hymn, ‘He wept, He bled, He died for you,’ was given out, which again sank into my soul.

“January 12th, 1994. David preached at Eastbourne, and during his remarks he mentioned a promise that I had many years ago, which was, ‘Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.’ Once again this broke my hard heart.

“March 13th, 1994. Text, Joshua 4. 6: ‘What mean ye by these stones?’ Pastor was very helped; described what these stones were, but more in the morning of going through the river of Jordan. Early in the morning I had these words: ‘This world is not my home.’ I thought it was hymn 1048, but found it to be 948; felt both hymns were on eternity, and Pastor spoke of the river of death, and the last hymn was 934 (“Jerusalem, my happy home”). I looked at this before the service and it broke me down, but was able to sing the hymn when it was given out. It was a good morning service; good in the evening, but not quite the same.

“September 18th, 1994. Went to chapel, feeling to need a fresh token. Text for the day was Luke 2. 29. Feeling the Lord’s presence, felt so comfortable, and then Pastor quoted last verse of hymn 801. I had this verse come very forcibly to me in the night about two weeks before this. I had to put the light on to look it up. I really only felt one line: ‘O Jesus, Thou art mine,’ but then I read through the whole verse, and the whole hymn was so good to me, and Pastor quoted this both morning and evening. It was a good confirmation, because Pastor knew nothing about my feelings.”



This month we have a change of printer. For over fifty years Chandlers (Printers) Ltd. have printed our magazines. The work has now been given to Mr. John Chapman of Stotfold, who commences with this issue.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
FEBRUARY 2009

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

SECRET THINGS AND THINGS THAT ARE REVEALED

“The secret things belong unto our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever” (Deut. 29. 29).

Our God is great. He gives no account of His matters. So there are the secret things; God has seen fit not to make them known. If we have clear views of the eternity, the wisdom, the holiness, the omniscience of God, this is only what we should expect.

So we are warned to avoid curious prying into mysteries which God has chosen not to make known. We have two clear examples of this soon after the Lord’s resurrection. In John chapter 21, the Lord lovingly restored Peter, and then revealed to him something of his future pathway. But then Peter asked a question about his fellow-disciple John: “Lord, and what shall this man do?” The Lord’s reply was: “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee” – the secret things – “Follow thou Me” – the things that are revealed.

Again in Acts chapter 1, just before the ascension, the disciples asked the Lord: “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” But this was one of the secret things which belong to God; so the Lord replied, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.”

We are reminded of a remarkable sermon once preached by the hymnwriter Benjamin Beddome (1717-1795). He was an eminent preacher but a man of very fearful and timid disposition. On one occasion he was engaged to preach away from home and, of course, the pastor and people were pleased to have such an eminent man in their pulpit. But during the hymn before the sermon, Beddome was overcome with fear and confusion. Hurrying from the pulpit, he asked the local pastor what he should preach about, and the pastor, mystified at the great man, replied, “Don’t ask foolish questions!”

So Beddome took this as his text: “Foolish and unlearned questions avoid” (2 Tim. 2. 23), and preached a remarkable sermon (see *Gospel Standard* 1976, page 41). In it he spoke of the questions it is wrong to ask, and then a few vital questions, such as: “Am I ready to meet God?”; “What think ye of Christ?” etc.

Much confusion is caused among the Lord’s people when they begin to mix up the secret things and the revealed things. So Deuteronomy 29, verse 29 is a very important verse; there is a vital principle here.

1. *The second coming.* The Word of God makes it abundantly clear that the Lord Jesus will return. His coming is certain, personal, in power and glory, and He will come to judge the world in righteousness. These are the things that are revealed.

But there are many secret things – especially *when*. Jesus Himself said, “Of that hour knoweth no man, not the angels in heaven, but the Father only.” Yet proud man will be wise, and many godly men have erred in predicting the year of the Lord’s second coming.

There are many other things the Lord has not been pleased to reveal. We once heard a minister, we believe a good man, who barrenised his ministry by speculation about the Lord’s return.

Yet there are questions we need to ask. “Am I ready to meet God? Am I made a real Christian, washed in the Redeemer’s blood?”

2. *Trouble.* How often when sorrow, disappointment, losses and crosses come, we ask *why!* But the mystery of why some of God’s people suffer is one of those secret things that belong to God.

“Not Gabriel asks the reason why,
Nor God the reason gives.”

But God *has* revealed that troubles will come. “Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward,” and sin is the cause of all our woes.

He has revealed that He is all-wise, all-gracious, that He never makes a mistake, and that He never causes His children a needless tear.

He has also revealed that all His people’s troubles will work together for His glory and their eternal good. That He will be with them “in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch [them]” (Job 5. 19). That He will help them, uphold them, support them. These are the things that are revealed.

3. *The origin of evil.* Ever since Adam fell, human reason has debated why God, if almighty, permitted sin with all its God-dishonouring evil to enter the world.

“O thou hideous monster, sin,
What a curse hast thou brought in!”

God has never been pleased to answer this question. It is one of the secret things.

A quaint old preacher, speaking on this point of sin entering the world, spoke like this. Years ago, on a farm, the cattle escaped. Some went down the road, some were treading down the corn, and others were causing a nuisance in different ways. One farmhand said it was impossible that they could have got out. Another said all the hedges were in good condition and the gates securely closed. Others began to suggest reasons for the mistake. But the exasperated farmer cried, “They are out – and get after them to bring them back as quickly as you can!”

What God has revealed is that “sin entered the world, and death by sin.” Sin must be punished. God will by no means clear the guilty. But He has also revealed the remedy in the Person and work of His beloved Son – and we need the Holy Spirit to make this known to us personally.

4. *The future.* How often we want to pry into future things – what will be; what will not be! But this is wisely hidden. When in our right minds,

“we would not long to see
Our lot with curious eyes,
What gloomy lines are writ for us,
Or what bring scenes may rise.”

God has revealed that there will be trouble and sorrow, the temptations of Satan, the trials in providence, right to the very end of our lives. This is sure. Equally sure, He will be with His people to the end. “For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” He will help. He will supply His people’s needs.

5. *The book of life.* Scripture makes it abundantly clear that there is a book of life in which the names of all God’s chosen are recorded. But who they are is only known to God. None can ascend to heaven and pry into the book of life.

Yet God has revealed in His Word how He deals with these chosen ones in love and mercy. He quickens them into life, teaches them their need of a Saviour, puts His holy fear in their hearts, gives them a hunger and thirst after the gospel, teaches them to pray, gives them repentance, leads them to the Saviour. And so they make their election (the secret thing) sure by their calling (the revealed thing).

“The streams of love I trace
Back to their fountain, God;
And in His wondrous mercy see
Eternal thoughts of love to me.”

Jesus said, “All that the Father giveth Me (the secret thing) shall come to Me (the revealed thing)”; and then He kindly added, “And him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.”

We are reminded of the old soldier in the Highlands of Scotland. It was the communion season, and the day when godly men were asked to “speak to the question.” The question that day was: “How can a sinner know that his name is in the book of life?”

The old soldier spoke something like this. “You all know I am an old soldier, and so I receive a pension. Now I know that there is a big book in London where the names of all those who receive the pension are written. I have never been to London. I have never seen the book or read my name there. But as month by month unfailingly my pension comes to me, I know that my name must be there.”

He proceeded to speak of how the sinner receives the blessings of mercy and grace which flow from heaven, and so are sweet tokens that his name is written in heaven.

May the Lord give us grace to know the difference between the things that are secret and the things that are revealed, and may He enable us humbly to seek that we might know these things through the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

WHERE ART THOU?

*Sermon preached by J.S. Green at Gower Street
Memorial Chapel, London, on September 24th, 1961*

Text: “And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Gen. 3. 9, 10).

This is indeed one of the most solemn chapters in the whole of God’s Word. It shows to us the sad and awful Fall of man, the Fall in which we are each involved. It affects each one of us; and but for God’s rich and sovereign grace, we must feel the effects of it in hell throughout eternity. O may the Lord enable us solemnly and earnestly to consider these things! It was not God who departed from man; it was man who wilfully disobeyed his Maker and departed from his God.

Adam, in the sad and solemn state and condition that he was in, wished to have nothing more to do with God. He would have hidden himself from the very presence of God. And that is exactly how each sinner has been born into this world – desiring to have nothing to do with God. They will have to do with religion, some of them, on condition that it suits their flesh and their understanding. But they have no desire to have any transaction with that infinitely great and holy God. You and I, my friends, were no different. That was our state and condition once upon a time, if it is not so this morning.

So Adam, after the Fall, his sad and awful Fall, wished to have no more to do with God. He had a solemn, slavish fear of God in his heart. He had a terrible dread of God, really, because he had broken the command that God had given him. And God gave the command so very, very clearly to Adam and Eve. And as we were reading in this chapter, Eve had not forgotten the command that God had given to herself and to her husband. She told the tempter the very words which God had spoken to them by way of warning. So it was a wilful breaking of God’s commandment. Adam did it with his eyes open. God had warned him of the solemn result if he should transgress.

I admit this is a great mystery, one that I cannot solve, how that Adam should have been created by God as we read: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." They came forth sinless from their Maker's hand. I feel that the Fall will ever remain a mystery to our poor minds.

And although Adam was thus created upright and he was innocent, there was in him that capability of falling. That is very clear. Yet I firmly believe this, that God so created Adam and gave him power to resist the devil and to resist temptation, that if he had so willed, he could have remained in his innocency. His sin was absolutely wilful. He could have kept himself from it. And yet he believed the lie of the devil, and thus wilfully transgressed the law of his Maker.

And it immediately had a solemn effect. Before Adam fell, he loved God's presence, he loved to have communion with God. Now he wished for this no more. As I have said, there was a dread and awful fear of God; and so, when Adam and his wife heard the voice of God in the cool of the day, they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. But they could not hide themselves from God's all-seeing eye. God knew all about them. God knew what they had done. It was all clear to Him.

And so "the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou?" Or, "What hast thou done? In what state and condition do you find yourself now?" "Where art thou?" And we find that there was no repentance in Adam's heart, there was no real sorrow over what he had done. He sought, with his wife, to find excuses. One would blame the other, and the other would blame the serpent, saying, "The serpent tempted me, and I did eat." No gracious confession of what they had done: they were sadly hardened through their sin. They were alienated from God by that wicked work.

And so God puts this question to Adam, "Where art thou?" Very solemn! Adam could not get away from God: he must hear that solemn voice, and God speaks to him then most solemnly. And God said unto him, "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." We only have to look around us, my friends, and we see on every hand the sad and solemn effects of the Fall. It seems to me that we in our day see the effects of it even more than did our forefathers. Wherever we look, wherever we go, we see the sad fruit of that black transgression that took place in the Garden of Eden opened up to us. And more than that: some of us feel the effects of the Fall in our poor hearts and minds. We realise with much pain and sorrow day by day that we are at best but poor, fallen sinners.

But what a humbling lesson this is! This is the first lesson we learn in Jesus' school. And it is good to be well-grounded in this, and to feel that we are no better than Adam was when God spoke to him. He wished, in that state, to have nothing more to do with God. You were just singing in that very wonderful hymn:

“How sad our state by nature is;
Our sin how deep it stains;
And Satan binds our captive minds
Fast in his slavish chains.”

And I believe that to be the truth; and some of you feel it to be the truth, and you know that by nature you would have nothing to do with God. You do not want that religion which would be a cross to your flesh.

So man, we believe, fell completely from the image of God. He wilfully transgressed God's holy law, and since that time his posterity has been born in sin and all that alienates from God.

But if this question should be put to us this morning that was put to Adam, what would our answer be? “Where art thou?” “Where am I?” What have we to answer to the question? Some of you could, I believe, truthfully say, “There was a time when it was with me as you have described, when I felt I wished to have nothing to do with God. God was not in all my thoughts. My heart, my affections, were set upon the world. Like Asaph said, I was as a beast before Thee, just living for the things of this poor, dying world; careless regarding the welfare of my never-dying soul.”

Some of you may be there this morning, for all I know: careless, indifferent, proud, unrepentant, living your life as you desire to live, not feeling your need of His mercy and His forgiveness, and like Adam and Eve, trying to hide yourself in fig leaves. There may be some natural conviction of sin, and that may make you feel your need of some reformation; and you may have reformed yourself. You may say, “I am a very different man or woman from what once I was. Once I took God's name in vain; I desecrated the Sabbath, I sought my own pleasure on that day. Things are very different with me now. I read God's Word; I do many things for God; I spend my substance for Him and my strength for Him; and I quite expect when I come to the end of my life God will say to me, ‘Well done!’ and I shall get safe to heaven.” We have often been told, my friends, that we shall never get to heaven upon reformation. I do believe that where there is regeneration, there *will* be reformation. But there may be reformation when there is no regeneration; and in that state and condition a sinner trusts to his own self-righteousness, and expects that a holy God will receive him on that ground.

Others have natural conviction of sin. They believe that there is righteousness and judgment to come, and they quite intend one day to

serve the Lord, to become religious, prayerful and careful about their souls. But not today! No! Religion would be too much of an encumbrance to them today. It would spoil their carnal pleasures, and so forth; and so it is not today, but one day, later. They promise that one day they will turn, they will acknowledge God, they will pray to Him and read His Word. But that day will never come! Have you thought of that, sinner? "What?" say you, "that day never come?" *It will never come!* You say, "Shall I never be able to turn from my evil ways and make myself fit to stand before a holy God?" Never!

One young man, you know, who came to the Lord Jesus, and Jesus told him what was required, said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up." The Lord said, "Yet lackest thou one thing. Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." He said, "No; certainly not." He went away very sorrowful, because he was very rich. He did not wish to take up his cross and follow the Lord. And yet he thought he was tolerably good on account of his good works.

Did not the Lord Jesus in His ministry make it very, very clear, "Ye must be born again"? And, except a man be born again of the Spirit he shall not see the kingdom of heaven. Now Adam had not been born again when God thus spoke to him, "Where art thou?" The poor man knew nothing then of God's rich provision for poor sinners. Nothing stood before Adam but despair, and he felt in his heart enmity against this great God. The devil had indeed, it appeared, gained the day. The devil was envious at the innocency of man in which God had created him. Having fallen, through pride, from the very presence of God in heaven, O how he envied and hated God's creation! He hated man, and he did in a subtle way seek to gain his own ends, and I firmly believe that he thought he had accomplished that. I believe he thought he was wiser than God and had gained the victory. But he had not. He did not know the rich provision God had made for poor Adam. Neither did Adam at this time!

"Where art thou?" Without hope, without desire after God. That is where Adam was. But where art thou, my friend? Perhaps some of you feel, "I am in a most solemn state and condition, if you did but know it. If you could look into my heart, you would see there a heart full of fear, full of trouble, full of distress. I feel I am a poor, fallen son or daughter of Adam." Where there is this gracious conviction of sin, there is a closing of a sinner's mouth. A mere professor usually has plenty to say, plenty of chatter, until God closes his mouth. God has shut some of our mouths. There was a time when some of us, if we could have answered the question, "Where art thou?" would have made this confession: "We are lost for ever. Woe is me, for I am undone: I am

without hope. I can see, I can feel, I have solemnly broken God's holy law; I am under its curse. I have nothing to say if God should consign me to endless ruin, as good Watts says in that verse:

‘Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce Thee just in death;
And if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well.’”

Is that where you are, friends? Can you truthfully say that you feel to be a poor, lost, guilty, undone sinner? You may say, “There can be no mercy for me. God would not be just were He to be merciful to me, because it would be contrary to His justice and to His law.” But it would not, my dear friends. No! Though it is true you stand justly condemned by a broken law and by God's justice, yet there is that blessed gospel: there is the Lord Jesus Christ. And I believe the gospel began to be set forth before poor Adam.

God did not let him remain with his fig leaves on. No! Blood was shed. The beasts were killed and their skins were taken, and Adam and Eve were clothed. And that wonderful promise was given to them, I believe, and they heard that solemn word spoken to their enemy: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” There I believe we have the gospel first set forth. And no doubt the dear Lord did preach the gospel to poor, lost, fallen Adam. And he began to see that, although by nature he wished to have nothing to do with God, yet the Lord began to break down his hard and rocky heart. He began to preach to him that everlasting gospel; He began to confound the devil when He set forth His blessed, precious provision for poor, lost sinners. So, my dear friend, you need not despair, although you feel so guilty, so undone, and feel how just God would be in consigning you to endless ruin. There is hope for thee.

And it is indeed a great mercy if you are compelled to go before God in prayer, feeling how undone, wretched and ruined you are in and of yourself. It is good if you feel your own works, your own fancied goodness, can never commend you to God, and you feel your need of the righteousness of Jesus.

Now, whilst some of you may see no clear answer to the question, “Where art thou?” you may be able to say, “Although I feel to be a poor, lost, wretched, undone sinner, I am hoping in the Lord's mercy. I realise, I feel, there is no hope in self, no hope at all, but I just begin to see that there is provision made by God for poor, lost, wretched sinners like myself.” So you are hoping in God's mercy. You can say, “I'll not despair, for who can tell?” You feel how undone you are by nature; you

have many a fear in your poor heart, and yet you have had the gospel preached to you.

It is a blessed day in the experience of a poor, feelingly-lost sinner, when he or she first hears the gospel; when that poor sinner feels there is mercy with that great God. Some of you will never forget when God first raised you up from that pit of feeling despair and ruin. You had not that sweet and blessed clear deliverance you have now, but you could see and feel the dawning of the gospel day in your heart; you began to hear of the Lord Jesus with something more than the outward ear; you began to hear of Him by faith in your heart, and you were encouraged to pray and to seek Him.

“Where art thou?” Hoping in Jesus’ blood; hoping in Jesus’ merits; believing that at last I shall get safe to heaven and live for ever with God in that blessed place. Now you go on seeking, my friends. “Where art thou?” You may say humbly, “Once a poor, lost sinner, but now found:

“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to save my soul from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.”

“He has mercifully found me, convinced me of my sins and led me forth by faith to the precious blood of Jesus and to His righteousness. And although in myself still I am a poor, wretched, undone sinner, yet in Jesus I am all fair, and shall one day reach that holy, happy place where He dwells.”

“And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?” We believe the Lord God in His own time makes this call to each of His people. He finds them; He convinces them of their sins and their lost estate; He closes their mouths as to any hope in themselves; and then with repentance and confession for their sins, He leads them to His dear Son, the Fount of every blessing. May each one of us, if God’s will, be mercifully found, mercifully led. And then at last, though involved in the Fall, and completely lost and ruined by it, as we are saved through the merits of Jesus, we shall get safe to heaven. Amen.

Beware of the smallest beginnings of temptations. No wise man will neglect or slight the smallest spark of fire, especially if he see it among many barrels of gunpowder. You carry gunpowder about you; O take heed of sparks.

John Flavel

If there be any way or means on earth to bring us upon our knees before God in secret, it is the serious and solemn thoughts of eternity.

Thomas Brooks

THE PUBLICAN'S PRAYER

By Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

The scope of this parable is prefixed to it, and we are told (Luke 18. 9) who they were at whom it was levelled, and for whom it was calculated. The Lord Jesus designed it for the conviction of some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. They were such as had,

1. A great conceit of themselves and of their own goodness; they thought themselves as holy as they needed to be, and holier than all their neighbours, and such as might serve for examples to them all. But that was not all.

2. They had a confidence in themselves before God, and not only had a high opinion of their own righteousness, but depended upon the merit of it, whenever they addressed God, as their plea. They trusted in themselves as being righteous. They thought they had made God their debtor, and might demand anything from Him; and,

3. They despised others and looked upon them with contempt, as not worthy to be compared with them.

Now Christ by this parable would show such their folly, and that thereby they shut themselves out from acceptance with God. This is called a parable, though there be nothing of similitude in it, but it is rather a description of the different temper and language of those that proudly justify themselves, and those that humbly condemn themselves, and their different standing before God. It is matter of fact every day.

I. Here are both these addressing themselves to the duty of prayer at the same place and time (verse 10): "Two men went up into the temple" (for the temple stood upon a hill) "to pray." It was not the hour of public prayer, but they went thither to offer up their personal devotions, as was usual with good people at that time, when the temple was not only the *place*, but the *medium* of worship, and God had promised, in answer to Solomon's request, that whatever prayer was made in a right manner *in* or *towards* that house, it should therefore the rather be accepted. Christ is our temple, and to Him we must have an eye in all our approaches to God.

The Pharisee and the publican both went to the temple to pray. *Note:* among the worshippers of God in the visible church there is a mixture of good and bad, of some that are accepted of God, and some that are not; and so it has been ever since Cain and Abel brought their offering to the same altar. The Pharisee, proud as he was, could not think himself above prayer, nor could the publican, humble as he was, think himself shut out from the benefit of it; but we have reason to think that these went with different views.

1. The Pharisee went to the temple to pray because it was a public place, more public than the corners of the streets, and therefore he should have many eyes upon him, who would applaud his devotion, which perhaps was more than was expected. The character Christ gave of the Pharisees, that all their works they did to be seen of men, gives us occasion for this suspicion. *Note:* hypocrites keep up the external performances of religion only to save or gain credit. There are many whom we see every day at the temple whom, it is to be feared, we shall not see in the great day at Christ's right hand.

2. The publican went to the temple because it was appointed to be "an house of prayer for all people" (Isa. 56. 7). The Pharisee came to the temple upon a compliment, the publican upon business; the Pharisee to make his appearance, the publican to make his request. Now God sees with what disposition and design we come to wait upon Him in holy ordinances, and will judge of us accordingly.

II. Here is the Pharisee's address to God (for a prayer I cannot call it): he "stood and prayed thus with himself" (verses 11, 12). Standing by himself, he "prayed thus," so some read it he was wholly intent upon himself, had nothing in his eye but self, his own praise, and not God's glory; or, standing in some conspicuous place, where he distinguished himself; or, setting himself with a great deal of state and formality, he prayed thus. Now that which he is here supposed to say is that which shows,

1. That he trusted to himself that he was righteous. A great many good things he said of himself, which we will suppose to be true. He was free from gross and scandalous sins; he was not an extortioner, not a usurer, not oppressive to debtors or tenants, but fair and kind to all that had dependence upon him. He was not unjust in any of his dealings; he did no man any wrong; he could say, as Samuel, "Whose ox ... or whose ass have I taken?" He was no adulterer, but had possessed his vessel in sanctification and honour. Yet this was not all; he fasted twice in the week, as an act partly of temperance, partly of devotion. The Pharisees and their disciples fasted twice a week, Monday and Thursday. Thus he glorified God with his body: yet that was not all. He gave tithes of all that he possessed, according to the law, and so glorified God with his worldly estate. Now all this was very well and commendable. Miserable is the condition of those who come short of the righteousness of this Pharisee, yet he was not accepted; and why was he not?

i. His giving God thanks for this, though in itself a good thing, yet seems to be a mere formality. He does not say, "By the grace of God I am what I am," as Paul did, but turns it off with a slight, God, I thank Thee, which is intended but for a plausible introduction to a proud, vainglorious ostentation of himself.

ii. He makes his boast of this and dwells with delight upon this subject, as if all his business to the temple was to tell God Almighty how very good he was; and he is ready to say, with those hypocrites that we read of, "Wherefore have we fasted, and Thou seest not?" (Isa. 58. 3).

iii. He trusted to it as a righteousness, and not only mentioned it, but pleaded it, as if hereby he had merited at the hands of God, and made Him his debtor.

iv. Here is not one word of prayer in all he saith. He went up to the temple to pray, but forgot his errand, was so full of himself and his own goodness that he thought he had need of nothing, no, not of the favour and grace of God, which, it would seem, he did not think worth asking.

2. That he despised others.

i. He thought meanly of all mankind but himself: "I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are." He speaks indefinitely, as if he were better than any. We may have reason to thank God that we are not as some men are that are notoriously wicked and vile; but to speak at random thus, as if we only were good, and all besides us were reprobates, is to judge by wholesale.

ii. He thought meanly in a particular manner of this publican, whom he had left behind, it is probable, in the court of the Gentiles, and whose company he had fallen into as he came to the temple. He knew that he was a publican, and therefore very uncharitably concluded that he was an extortioner, unjust, and all that is naught. Suppose it had been so, and he had known it, what business had he to take notice of it? Could not he say his prayers (and that was all that the Pharisees did) without reproaching his neighbours? Or was this a part of his "God, I thank Thee"? And was he as much pleased with the publican's badness as with his own goodness? There could not be a plainer evidence, not only of the want of humility and charity, but of reigning pride and malice, than this was.

III. Here is the publican's address to God, which was the reverse of the Pharisee's, as full of humility and humiliation as his was of pride and ostentation; as full of repentance for sin, and desire towards God, as his was of confidence in himself and his own righteousness and sufficiency.

1. He expressed his repentance and humility in *what he did*, and his gesture, when he addressed himself to his devotions, was expressive of great seriousness and humility, and the proper clothing of a broken, penitent and obedient heart.

i. He stood afar off. The Pharisee stood, but crowded up as high as he could, to the upper end of the court; the publican kept at a distance under a sense of his unworthiness to draw near to God, and perhaps for fear of offending the Pharisee whom he observed to look scornfully upon him, and of disturbing his devotions. Hereby he owned that God might

justly behold him afar off, and send him into a state of eternal distance from Him, and that it was a great favour that God was pleased to admit him thus nigh.

ii. He "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven," much less his hands, as was usual in prayer. He did lift up his heart to God in the heavens, in holy desires, but through prevailing shame and humiliation, he did not lift up his eyes in holy confidence and courage. His iniquities are gone over his head, as a heavy burden, so that he is not able to look up (Psa. 40. 12). The dejection of his looks is an indication of the dejection of his mind at the thought of sin.

iii. He "smote upon his breast," in a holy indignation at himself for sin: "Thus would I smite this wicked heart of mine, the poisoned fountain out of which flow all the streams of sin, if I could come at it." The sinner's heart first smites him in a penitent rebuke (2 Sam. 24. 10). David's heart smote him. Sinner, what hast thou done? And then he smites his heart with penitent remorse: "O wretched man that I am!" Ephraim is said to smite upon his thigh (Jer. 31. 19). Great mourners are represented tabouring upon their breasts (Nah. 2. 7).

2. He expressed it in *what he said*. His prayer was short. Fear and shame hindered him from saying much; sighs and groans swallowed up his words; but what he said was to the purpose: "God be merciful to me a sinner." And blessed be God that we have this prayer upon record as an answered prayer, and that we are sure that he who prayed it went to his house justified; and so shall we if we pray it as he did, through Jesus Christ. "God be merciful to me a sinner"; the God of infinite mercy be merciful to me, for, if He be not, I am for ever undone, for ever miserable. "God be merciful to me," for I have been cruel to myself.

i. He owns himself a sinner by nature, by practice, guilty before God. "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee?" The Pharisee denies himself to be a sinner; none of his neighbours can charge him, and he sees no reason to charge himself, with anything amiss; he is clean, he is pure from sin. But the publican gives himself no other character than that of a sinner, a convicted criminal at God's bar.

ii. He has no dependence but upon the mercy of God, that, and that only, he relies upon. The Pharisee had insisted upon the merit of his fastings and tithes, but the poor publican disclaims all thought of merit, and flies to mercy as his city of refuge, and takes hold of the horn of that altar. "Justice condemns me; nothing will save me but mercy, mercy."

iii. He earnestly prays for the benefit of that mercy: O God, be merciful, be propitious to me, forgive my sins; be reconciled to me; take me into Thy favour; receive me graciously; love me freely." He comes as a beggar for an alms, when he is ready to perish for hunger. Probably he repeated this prayer with renewed affections, and perhaps said more

to the same purport, made a particular confession of his sins, and mentioned the particular mercies he wanted, and waited upon God for; but still this was the burden of the song: "God be merciful to me a sinner."

IV. Here is the publican's acceptance with God. We have seen how differently these two addressed themselves to God; it is now worthwhile to enquire how they sped. There were those who would cry up the Pharisee, by whom he would go to his house applauded, and who would look with contempt upon this sneaking, whining publican. But our Lord Jesus, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid, who is perfectly acquainted with all proceedings in the court of heaven, assures us that this poor, penitent, broken-hearted publican went to his house justified, rather than the other.

The Pharisee thought that if one of them must be justified and not the other, certainly it must be he rather than the publican. "No," saith Christ, "I tell you," I affirm it with the utmost assurance, and declare it to you with the utmost concern, I tell you, it is the publican rather than the Pharisee. The proud Pharisee goes away, rejected of God; his thanksgivings are so far from being accepted that they are an abomination. He is not justified, his sins are not pardoned, nor is he delivered from condemnation: he is not accepted as righteous in God's sight, because he is so righteous in his own sight; but the publican, upon this humble address to heaven, obtains the remission of his sins, and he whom the Pharisee would not set with the dogs of his flock, God sets with the children of His family. The reason given for this is because God's glory is to resist the proud and give grace to the humble.

1. Proud men who exalt themselves are rivals with God, and therefore they shall certainly be abased. God, in His discourse with Job, appeals to this proof that He is God, that He looks upon every one that is proud, and brings him low (Job 40. 12).

2. Humble men, who abase themselves, are subject to God, and they shall be exalted. God has preferment in store for those that will take it as a favour, not for those that demand it as a debt. He shall be exalted into the love of God and communion with Him, shall be exalted into a satisfaction in Himself, and exalted at last as high as heaven. See how the punishment answers the sin: "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased." See how the recompence answers the duty: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." See also the power of God's grace in bringing good out of evil. The publican had been a great sinner, and out of the greatness of his sin was brought the greatness of his repentance. "Out of the eater came forth meat." See, on the contrary, the power of Satan's malice in bringing evil out of good. It was good that the Pharisee was no extortioner, nor unjust; but the devil made him proud of this, to his ruin.

GEORGE GORTON'S WIFE

George Gorton (1798-1876) was one of our best-known ministers. He was pastor in the beautiful Cotswold village of Milton-under-Wychwood and later at Cheltenham. There seems to be no account of how he and his wife met.

My dear wife, Eliza Gorton, was born in Jamaica on April 21st, 1799. Her mother died in about a month after her child was born. In about a year the child had the smallpox. Her father thought he should lose her, but she got well, though she was weakly. Her father consequently sent her to England, but he never lived to see her return to Jamaica. He died about five years after his wife. Eliza was then sent from England to Jamaica to live with her uncle, Sir M.B. Clare, and it was in Jamaica the Lord was pleased first to convince her of her state as a sinner. This was when she was about twenty-three years old.

I now refer to what she wrote with her own hand: "Dec., 1823, I was on a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Page, who resided in a low mountain in Jamaica, where it never was too hot in the hottest season of the year; and on that account my uncle used to send me there every year to escape the greatest heat of the climate, I being in a bad state of health. When there, I never attended a place of worship, because the distance was too great, but Mr. Page used to read the Church Morning Service; and one Sunday, when he had concluded, he observed to me that there was one thing in the Apostles' Creed he could not give his assent to, viz., the resurrection of the body. I was surprised, for I had never given it a thought whether I believed it or not, supposing that repeating it was all that was required.

"I was no Bible reader; for about twelve years I do not remember opening it; but one Sunday night, before the Lord met with me, I read a chapter, and I thought I should never arrive at the end of it, it seemed so dry and uninteresting. However, I told Mr. Page that I did not know, but I thought it must be the body that was raised, for the soul never died. Still, not placing dependence on what I thought, I said I should like to see a book that treated on the subject. His wife, his wife's mother, and his own mother were present when I made the remark. His wife's mother went shortly after to visit a relative who lent her a book.

"But I should say in the meantime, the weather being unfavourable for walking, I was obliged to remain in the house; and lighting upon a Bible with the Apocrypha in it, which I had long wished to see, because, just after I left school, grandmamma, who read the Psalms and the lesson for the day, was reading in the Book of Wisdom, and I thought to myself what nice rules of conduct it contained, which made me wish very much to read it myself, so that I took the Bible into my bedroom and began reading it. But I had not read far when I was obliged to put it down, my sins flashed upon my mind, and my Babel-building was all thrown down,

and I was convicted as a sinner against God; it was against God I was a sinner. I had often confessed myself in church a miserable sinner with my lips, but at this time I felt myself to be one in deed and of a truth, and the sense of it filled my soul with dismay and trouble. I paced up and down the dining-room like a mad creature, and every now and then ran into my room to weep, sad evil thoughts assailing my mind the while. I tried to learn portions of Scripture, hoping by that means to get rid of the evil thoughts; and while I was in this state Mrs. Page's mother put the book into my hand, saying, 'You will find in this book what you wished to see respecting the resurrection of the body'; but I was too distressed to look into it at that time.

"One day these words came to me as if a voice had spoken them: 'I will cleanse thee from all thine idols.' The words seemed to portend trouble, and I ran from room to room to try to get rid of them, but still they followed me, and I did not know till four years after that they were in the Bible. Mr. Page took me down to Spanish Town, and when I arrived at my uncle's, my aunt came to meet me and kissed me. I burst into a flood of tears. I could not bear kindness – it overwhelmed me – and when my uncle smiled upon me, if he had taken a knife and thrust me through I could not have felt more pain. The very blessings that surrounded me were like so many daggers to my heart. I ran into my room to escape a recurrence of his kind looks towards me, and while I was pacing up and down my room, my aunt came in, and said, 'Eliza, what is the matter? It is evident that something weighs heavily on your mind; it appears on your countenance.' I replied, 'I am a sinner against *God*.' She told me I was nervous, and that I should work or read. I told her I could do neither. She asked me if I had done anything more than usual since I had been at Ranger's Lodge. I answered, 'No; but I am a sinner against *God*.' She then asked me if they had been kind to me. I replied, 'No one could be kinder.'

"She then left my room and, having a pain in my side, I lay down on the floor, thinking the bed was too good for me; and while I lay there I prayed the first prayer from soul-necessity that I ever prayed in my life, and that was, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' And I smote on my breast from the anguish of my mind, though I really knew nothing of the publican, not being a Bible reader. My aunt came in, and made me get on the bed, and began to speak kindly to me. I begged of her not to do so, as I could not bear it. I said, 'The greatest kindness you can do me is to put me somewhere where I cannot see the light of the sun, and give me bread and water; for the blessings that surround me reproach me.' I did not close my eyes for ten days and ten nights, owing to the anguish of my mind, because I was a sinner against God; it was against *God* I was a sinner. There was the emphasis in my mind. The thought of hell never once occurred to me.

"The doctor's shop was next door to our house, and I could send for any medicine I liked without it being observed; and I sent from time to time for a little red lavender, lest by having a large quantity at a time I might excite suspicion, as I had heard my uncle say that a *pint* was sufficient to kill a person, and I intended when I had procured it to have taken it to put me out of my misery.

"But the Lord was graciously pleased to prevent me, blessed be His holy name, by enabling me to look in the book that had been put into my hand. I did not read far before He opened up to my mind the way of salvation, of which I had no more even head-knowledge than a newborn babe; and He caused me to hope in His mercy and spoke pardon home to my soul through the blessed blood of atonement. 'He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him'; and, 'Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.'

"It was like a new world to me. Old things seemed to have passed away, and all things become new. I felt that I had been among them that sit in darkness and the region of the shadow of death, but a great light had arisen upon me, and I was rejoicing in the forgiving love of God. Yet I felt my inbred corruptions so strong, and I had such a sight of my heart as a sink of sin, that I cried out with the apostle, 'Who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?' I felt great self-loathing, while at the same time I rejoiced in the Lord. I felt that my heart was like the dark room mentioned in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was full of dust, but as long as the shutters were closed it was not observable; but as soon as they were opened the filth was discovered. I had heard my aunts read the *Pilgrim's Progress* when a little child, and was very much excited by it, but looked upon it as a common story.

"I was not under a gospel ministry when the Lord met with me. Indeed, I had not been under any ministry for nine months, having been ill for six months, and in the country for three months. I had not a single professor near me. I was in the world and of the world, and had no desire to become religious, nor was there any inducement whatever to be so, but on the contrary, to continue worldly. I cannot doubt but that it was the Lord's work.

"Shortly after this I came to England, and stayed with Mrs. Rees, the captain's wife, until my aunt arrived from France to take me over there, my uncle having written to her for that purpose. After my aunt Clara arrived we were detained in England some time longer than we intended by pecuniary affairs that required settling. At this time the steeple [the claims of the Church of England] cleaved to me, and I would not go where I could hear the gospel, because it was a dissenting place of worship, though my aunt wished me to go. I did not sit under the gospel for four years after the Lord met with me. There being no gospel in the place where I resided with my aunt in France, I went on Sunday

mornings for a time to the French Protestant chapel, but I heard so much of the dignity of man that I was quite disgusted. It was wonderful how the Lord opened the Scriptures to my mind at this time that I was deprived of the outward means. Portions were brought to my mind that I did not know that I had ever read. When I prayed, I was tempted to believe myself a hypocrite, though I had made no profession. Then I was so wavering in my mind I feared I should never hold out to the end; but this text was a great encouragement to my mind: ‘Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God.’

“Another time I felt low in my mind, and I said, ‘Lord, have mercy upon me’; and the answer I received was, ‘I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.’ Another time my prayer was, ‘If Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean!’ I was at this time much pursued by sin and Satan, more than I had ever been before; and I feared that the Lord was giving me over to a reprobate mind. But these two lines in Hart’s hymns were a great encouragement to my mind:

“‘He will never, *never* leave us,
Nor will let us quite leave Him.’

“My aunt Eliza was very anxious to convert me to the Romish religion, and had I gone to France before the Lord met with me, I believe she would have succeeded, for the change in her disposition was so evident that I should have thought it was the religion that had effected it, and that would have been my strongest inducement to join that communion. My aunt Eliza took me to mass twice, and lent me Romish books to read, but I often offended her when I told her my opinion of them. Amongst others she lent me the *Life of Madame De la Motte Guion* [Madame Guyon, much admired by William Cowper] who, I believe, was a good woman, though hampered with many errors. I had the Lord’s presence all the time I was reading her book. She was very much persecuted by her own people on account of her religion. In her life were many penances mentioned that she had had recourse to; and there being one evil to which I had a very strong temptation, I thought I would also have recourse to a penance, in hopes that that might help me against it. But invariably when I thought of doing so, which was three separate times, this scripture struck my mind with such power that I durst not think of it: ‘My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’

“One day my aunt Eliza said to me, ‘I have great hopes of seeing you a member of the true, visible church.’ I said, ‘I know of no true, visible church.’ I only knew of the church of Christ, which I believed to be the souls of all believers. She said the church of Rome was the true, visible church; it was proved by its antiquity. And there the conversation ended as far as I can remember.

“About this time my uncle wrote to say he wished us to go to Havre de Grace. When we were there I seldom went to church, it being only a legal ministry, or at the most only an attempt at preaching the gospel; for I thought it more profitable to read the Morning Service and Lessons, with a portion of *Theron and Aspasio* [James Hervey’s renowned book on imputed righteousness]. We were about a year and a half at Sanvie before the gospel was brought to Havre, and some time before I was very dark in my mind, and I had entreated the Lord several times to restore the light of His countenance, without receiving any answer. I thought it was useless to pray, yet I thought I would pray once more, and when I had finished, I opened my Bible at Luke 18, about the unjust judge avenging the poor widow because of her importunity. When I came to: ‘And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?’ Yea, I say unto you, He will avenge them, and that speedily, such light flowed into my mind, and so many precious promises, that I had a revival in my soul and a most sweet time.

“A little after this the gospel was brought to Havre by Mr. Dallas. He opened a sailors’ reading room, and Mr. Palmer was engaged to come over from Honfleur to lecture every Tuesday evening. I never remember missing one of these opportunities, though I had about three miles to walk. I suppose if it had rained torrents I should have gone. The Word of God was precious in those days. I have often sat with my shoes full of water, and the promises of God flowing sweetly into my mind.

“After this, with the exception of going once to church, I used to go over to Honfleur to hear Mr. Palmer on the Sunday. I went over on the Saturday, and stayed at the inn till Monday, and then returned home on the next Monday. Once when I was about to return home, they asked me to stay a month with them. As I had a bad cough, they thought the change might be beneficial. I thanked them, and said if my aunt were agreeable, I would return and avail myself of their kind invitation. So, my aunt having no objection, I went, and I spent a very happy time, for I heard much of the Scriptures expounded, and there was nothing to me at that time like the Scriptures.

“Shortly after this my aunt and uncle arrived from Jamaica, and came to see us, and went over with us to Honfleur to look for a house, and we went to reside there, which I was very glad of, because I had so many more opportunities of hearing the Word. We were often invited to drink tea at the clergyman’s, and I generally found these edifying seasons, for he would frequently expound portions of Scripture very sweetly; but if trifling conversation prevented, I came away disappointed. I had so much of the Lord’s presence about this time that it was quite irksome to go out anywhere, and I was not satisfied till I returned home again. I longed to go to my better home, that I might have full communion.

“About this time I had severe pains in my back and head, and I remember fearing to lose the pain, lest I should lose the pleasure which the sweet presence of the Lord afforded me. I left France because our minister had been disabled from preaching about five months, and there seemed no prospect of another coming to Honfleur, although it was not more than three weeks, I believe, after I left, that Mr. Aubury came there, which, if I had had any idea of, I should have remained, he being a gospel minister. When I came to England, I went to board with Mrs. Swallow for a week, not intending to remain there; but finding she was a Christian, I made up my mind to continue with her. Instead of asking for the nearest church, I asked where I could hear the truth, and I was directed to Shouldam Street Baptist chapel.

“I was so delighted to find myself once more in a place of worship where I could hear the gospel that I wept for joy, for I had been deprived of hearing the Word for five months. I remember the text: ‘My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’ He spoke of a Friend at court. I heard him well, and was much pleased with that observation. Mrs. Swallow and I went to hear together almost every night in the week. I had not then lost my first love. I was never so happy as when I was with the Lord’s people. I would rather have had the company of a few God-fearing, old women than the most courted worldly society that could be.

“One day Mrs. Rowe, a Christian friend, said she wished I would go to hear Mr. Irving [the famous Edward Irving, who fell into serious error], he was such a powerful preacher. She said he was preaching from the first chapter of John’s gospel, and he would take the fourteenth verse for his text. I said I would go, for if he held the doctrine I had heard he did (but which he denied in a printed letter signed by himself and elders) he would be sure to broach it on that text; but before I set out to hear him, I prayed the Lord that if I was going to hear error He would show me the fallacy of it from His own Word. Mr. I. spoke of Jesus taking upon Him a fallen, sinful nature, and he said if He had not, where was the merit of His understanding? And many other such blasphemous assertions; and he had recourse to heathen mythology to support them. He spoke of Hercules and the serpent, and he leaned over the pulpit and said, ‘Is this dishonouring to God?’ I would have said, ‘Yes,’ if I durst.

I had some distance to walk home, and all the way passages of Scripture flowed into my mind, proving the fallacy of what he had said; and when I arrived at the house, I opened the book I was reading, where I had left off. The book was Dr. Owen, *On Communion with God*; and it was as if he had heard Mr. Irving, and was refuting him. It was so much to the point that I extracted it.

(To be continued)

GEORGE GORTON AND WILLIAM GADSBY

A young man named George Gorton, who lived at Stow-on-the-Wold, had been in great spiritual distress. Happening to come across William Gadsby's *The Perfect Law of Liberty*, under God's blessing he found the relief he sought in reading it. It was no preaching or sermon he heard, but the reading of this book. His soul was set at liberty, and after this glorious deliverance he was baptized along with his friend Robert Roff at Stow-on-the-Wold.

A few years later he began to preach but, obviously, he always had a longing desire to see this William Gadsby, so he walked all the way to Manchester – about two hundred miles! In his obituary in the *Gospel Standard*, 1877, George Gorton's friend D. Kevill [Daniel Keevil?] wrote:

“He spoke to the late Mr. Smith, Baptist minister [Association], Cheltenham, about it; but Mr. S. said, ‘He won't see you; or, if he does, you will find him a gruff, austere and disagreeable man.’ This stopped him from going for a time. But it was of no use; so eventually he had to start. He got to Birmingham and slept at a coffee-house. He had very little more money in his pocket than would carry him to Manchester, and often wondered how he was to get back. In the evening he had some conversation with the coffee-house keeper, and had his supper, and in the morning his breakfast. To his surprise his host would not take a farthing from him, but, on the contrary, gave him half a crown.

“On arriving at Manchester, he made for Mr. Gadsby's chapel, as he understood it was preaching night (Wednesday). He called at a watchmaker's, to enquire where the chapel was, and was answered, ‘I attend there, but the service was last night. Mr. Gadsby, however, is to preach tonight at Pendlebury, about five miles from here.’ Mr. Gorton started off, walked to Pendlebury, and went to the room. The people waited, and waited, but Mr. Gadsby came not. At length they said to Mr. Gorton, ‘You are a preacher; you must preach.’ He objected; but was at last compelled to give way. When service was over, they said, ‘Now you have done Mr. Gadsby's work you must have Mr. Gadsby's bed.’ In the morning, a friend went with him to Mr. Gadsby's house. He was sitting in his armchair, very poorly. The friend introduced Mr. Gorton, and then mentioned what had occurred at Pendlebury. Mr. Gorton then gave an account of the Lord's dealings with him, and how Mr. Gadsby's writings had been blessed to his soul. ‘Instead of finding him that gruff old man that had been represented to me,’ said Mr. Gorton, when relating the circumstance, ‘the tears rolled down his face, and he said to me, “Now mind; while you stop in Manchester you must make my house your

home; you must not go anywhere else.” Of course Mr. Gorton had no difficulty in finding the means to return home.”

From *William Gadsby*, published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications.

WHY WEEPEST THOU?

A letter by James Bourne (see Reviews, page 58)

Dear Friend,

There is nothing in this life that can equal or be compared to the least and most transient view of God’s love in Christ Jesus to a broken-hearted sinner. I was much cast down this afternoon, and saw no end of that melancholy which turns everything into a wrong channel, besides filling the soul with slavish fear, as if God would never be gracious, and His mercies were clean gone for ever. Looking, and almost wearied out with looking, for some portion for my Sunday morning’s reading, I quite gave up what I always desire to find, that is, a word that comes first with sweetness and power to my own heart, and makes me feel master of my subject. But in turning over the leaves, my eyes caught these words (John 20): “Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping ... and they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” This suited my case, and moved me more than I can tell. I said, That is indeed the cause of all my sorrow. But my weeping was accompanied with such a divine adoration and sweet sense of His inestimable love, that I could scarcely show myself.

Many things in that chapter show Mary’s great anxiety, perplexity, and grief; but presently the Lord Jesus Christ said, “MARY”; and she knew the voice. So did I; it was the voice of love and mercy, of reconciliation and friendship. No, He is not gone for ever; but very near, if haply we feel after Him. How low these things make us fall! How little in our own estimation! How high and holy is the Lord! We know not how to exalt Him enough. He is truly what Mary called him, MASTER. We then desire that He should be our Lord and Master, our Priest and King; we seek with all the heart to render to Him again for all the benefits received; but alas, how little can be said or done!

And this is not all; for her further encouragement and mine, the Lord added, “Go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God and your God.” O my dear friend, these inestimable benefits exceed all words; and the very opening or glimpse of His sweet returning presence brought them all in. Eternal life was the

beginning, middle and end; and this is what the Apostle calls “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

All this began with the words, “Why weepest thou?” The remembrance is still so sweet that I can scarcely write the account to you. I have wept spiritually much lately, but the Lord’s visitations have preserved my spirit. The same evening, we are told, He appeared to His disciples, and as He always did, brought peace along with Him. So He does now whenever He comes, as I know full well, and would if I could invent better words to set such heavenly things before you; but what can I say, if the apostle calls it “passing all understanding,” and in another place, “unspeakable”? I must leave it to that experience you have often had. “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. O fear the Lord, ye His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him.”

Yours faithfully,

Tunbridge Wells, September 11th, 1836

J.B.

BOOK REVIEWS

Mercies of a Covenant God: The Autobiography of John Warburton; hardback; 256 pages; price £12.50 plus £1.08 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from 12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3BZ, or from agents.

What a delight it is to see Warburton’s *Mercies* in print once again in such a lovely edition! Surely this is a denominational classic, and we hope it will be read by all our young people who have never read it previously.

What an amazing man John Warburton (1776-1857) was! Whenever we think of him, we are amazed that a poor, destitute handloom weaver, with barely any education, should be raised by God to hold a congregation of up to a thousand (at Trowbridge, Wiltshire) for over forty years. We admire the amazing grace of God in this.

There is surely nothing in Christian literature just like Warburton’s *Mercies*. A Church of England clergyman was once asked for his opinion of it, and his reply was that it was the most honest autobiography he had ever read. In it we have the sinkings and risings, the wonderful deliverances, the answers to prayer, the wonderful way in which the Lord supplied his need, and the way in which both himself and his preaching were abundantly blessed.

We first read Warburton’s *Mercies* many years ago, and it is hard to say what is our chief memory: the depths of conviction and the wonderful deliverance under William Roby’s preaching; the times when in extremity the Lord appeared for him; his first hearing of William Gadsby, and his subsequent baptism by him; his first attempts to preach, and the time the Lord shut his mouth; his agony of mind when Pole Moor Chapel did not call him to be pastor; his further wish *not* to go to Trowbridge; his attempt to eke out his living by keeping pigs; his heart-

break on the death of his beautiful little daughter; his pursuit of his runaway son – so we might go on. Well might J.C. Philpot say, “This [Warburton’s *Mercies*] will prove his enduring and undying memorial, and live when every ear that heard him and blessed him, and every eye that saw him and gave witness to him, will have mouldered into dust.”

For the first time the book has been divided into chapters, and into sub-titled sections, which make reading so much easier. The previous prefaces, by J.C. Philpot, are included, as are some interesting illustrations. The laminated front cover has pictures of John Warburton when young and in old age.

Years ago, when often travelling to Manchester, we would see Stand Church, and we were reminded of the simple beginning of Warburton’s *Mercies*: “I was born at Stand, about five miles from Manchester, in October 1776.”

This is a most interesting book but a *spiritual* book. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

We wholeheartedly recommend it.

Olney Hymns, by John Newton and William Cowper; hardback; 168 pages; price £9 plus £2.08 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications.

Again most beautifully produced – with a coloured picture of the town of Olney on the front – *Olney Hymns* consists of all the hymns of John Newton and William Cowper.

How often Newton’s hymns, under the power of the Holy Spirit, have come right where the sinner is! Whether we think of the now popular “Amazing grace,” or hymns that were once as well known (“Glorious things of Thee are spoken”; “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!”; or the despised “’Tis a point I long to know,” which has been such a help to the tried family of God). How many have been encouraged by:

“He who has helped me hitherto,
Will help me all my journey through”;

or:

“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”!

William Cowper is different from his beloved friend John Newton – but only in this: he was a great poet. Indeed, in literary circles he is still esteemed as one of England’s greatest poets.

“There is a fountain, filled with blood”;
“O for a closer walk with God”;
“God moves in a mysterious way” –

these hymns are very precious.

It may be asked: why, after all these years, republish a book of hymns by writers who are so well-known?

1. It is excellent to have *all* Newton and Cowper’s hymns together in one book – the well-known and the little-known. *Olney Hymns* would make a lovely present.

2. There are a number of hymns that are not in Gadsby's Selection – in fact, not in any modern hymnbook.

3. Some well-known hymns contain extra, little-known verses. For instance, "There is a fountain":

"Lord, I believe Thou hast prepared
(Unworthy though I be)
For me a blood-bought, free reward,
A golden harp for me";

or, "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds":

"By Thee my prayers acceptance gain,
Although with sin defiled;
Satan accuses me in vain,
And I am owned a child."

There are seven verses of this hymn, as compared with only three in Gadsby's Selection.

It is good to read the popular "Amazing grace" with the correct last verse as written by Newton instead of the modern, "When we've been there ten thousand years"!

Olney Hymns is divided into three books:

I. On Select Passages of Scripture (from Genesis to Revelation in canonical order).

II. On Occasional Subjects: Seasons, Ordinances, Providences, Creation.

III. On the Progress and Changes of the Spiritual Life.

The Preface is the original one by John Newton (Olney, Bucks., Feb. 15, 1779). He concludes:

"The hour is approaching, and at my time of life cannot be very distant, when my heart, my pen, and my tongue, will no longer be able to move in their service. But I trust, while my heart continues to beat, it will feel a warm desire for the prosperity of their souls ['all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity']; and while my hand can write, and my tongue speak, it will be the business and the pleasure of my life, to aim at promoting their growth and establishment in the grace of our God and Saviour. To this precious grace I commend them, and earnestly entreat them, and all who love His name, to strive mightily with their prayers to God for me, that I may be preserved faithful to the end, and enabled at last to finish my course with joy."

We love John Newton.

Sukey Harley, by Jane Gilpin; hardback; 78 pages; price £5.95 plus £1.63 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications.

It is amazing how the story of a poor, illiterate young woman, living in a Shropshire village all her life, and born in 1784, should have so captivated the minds of God's people over the years. It is equally amazing that her life and testimony should be published yet once again.

Sukey Harley was one of that little group of people in the village of Pulverbach, near to the Long Myndd, who gathered round the ministry of James Bourne and Bernard Gilpin, and were graciously taught of the Lord. Many of their experiences were published as pamphlets and joined together in volumes of *Witnesses of the Truth*. In more recent years, great interest has been attracted

through J.H. Alexander's *More Than Notion*, which joins together the story of these godly people. There are still visitors to Sukey Harley's grave year by year.

The Vicar of Pulverbach, William Gilpin, "ground at the treadmill of formality," but his daughters, who dearly loved him, had to separate from him for the truth's sake. The Gilpins were very talented, and had a wonderful ability to make notes of their meetings with the characters round Pulverbach, and then very lucidly and interestingly set them down.

Jane Gilpin wrote the memoir of Sukey Harley. It is gratifying that she does not try to make her speak like an Oxford graduate!

Inside the front and back covers are most helpful maps of the district round Pulverbach (nowadays spelled "Pulverbatch.") There are a few pictures.

The account first appeared in 1837.

We include a typical piece:

"On the last Christmas Day of her life, 1852, she spoke as she always did especially at that season, of being most earnest in prayer for a week before that the Lord would visit her soul upon that day. And after describing a time of darkness in the forepart of the day, in which she feared her prayer would not be answered, she said:

"But afterwards He came in that verse of Hart's Christmas hymn:

'Go and find the royal Stranger
By these signs: A Babe you'll see,
Weak and lying in a manger,
Wrapt and swaddled – that is He.'

"The last words broke my heart, 'that is He.' And afterwards He directed me to read the tenth chapter of Hebrews, and I was able to draw near again, and found redemption, full, perfect and complete in that verse: 'This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God' (Heb. 10. 12). I got faith, and thought, 'What good would this be to me if I had not faith?' But I was enabled to see the Son, and believe on Him to everlasting life. I don't know what a contented state is without Christ, for ever since He called me at the first I have been *uncontented* without Him."

We have often been struck by what old Sukey said not long before she died: that many would be waiting to hear what she had to say – but she would probably say nothing. She had said it all already!

J.C. Philpot's comment was that Sukey Harley's life "shines in our eyes with distinguished lustre." He added: "A greater monument of the free, sovereign, discriminating grace of God than this poor, ignorant woman, we believe, scarcely stands on record."

Again beautifully produced, and again suitable for a present.

The Life and Letters of James Bourne, hardback; 562 pages; price £20 plus £4.20 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications.

For many years James Bourne's *Life and Letters* has been highly valued by the people of God. Our own copy, dating from 1875, once belonged to his granddaughters, the Misses Benson.

James Bourne (1773-1854) was the minister so greatly used in visiting the little group of godly people in the Shropshire village of Pulverbach. Later he was pastor of an Independent gathering at Sutton Coldfield, near Birmingham.

The “Life” is quite brief, comprising 62 pages of the book. Born in quite affluent circumstances, James Bourne became a private art tutor, staying with several noble families. His paintings (or water colours) still sell today at a good price, and some have hung in the Royal Academy. The way in which he was directed to devote his life to art is most unusual. To quote his own words:

“I went to my bedroom and fastened the door, and then fell on my knees, and with all my heart and soul cried to the Lord as nearly as I can remember in these words – O Lord, what shall I do to maintain myself? I cannot endure this miserable way of living. No sooner were these words out of my mouth, than it was impressed on my mind: *You must draw.*”

He became connected with William Huntington (who strangely would not agree to his preaching). Later he became a preacher much used by God, though moving in a comparatively small circle. James Bourne, the Gilpins, the Sukey Harley, and the others, did not really belong to any denomination.

But it is James Bourne’s letters for which he is specially remembered. In his lifetime they were copied and freely circulated among his friends. There are 475 of them altogether included in this book.

It would seem foolish to assess or describe the letters of James Bourne. Very gracious, very close, they comfort, exhort and warn. J.C. Philpot wrote: “It is some time since we met with a book of greater weight and power,” and lists what he counts the vital points:

1. His keen insight into the profession of his day.
2. The deep exercises of his own soul.
3. His deep reverence for the Word of truth.
4. His deep searchings of heart.
5. His holy freedom.

We have found James Bourne’s recently republished *Morning Readings* very profitable and feel sure the Lord’s people will find his letters the same.

The book is nicely produced with one of his own water colours (of Church Stretton church) on the front.

We feel the best recommendation is to print one of James Bourne’s own letters (see page 54).

Particular Redemption and the Free Offer, by David H.J. Gay; paperback; 278 pages; no price given; published by Brachus, 2a Banks Road, Biggleswade, SG18 0DY, copies obtainable at Amazon.

This is an extremely deep and learned book, carefully researched, with many references, and extremely detailed footnotes. It needs very careful reading.

Really there are two “halves” to the book – “the free offer” and “particular redemption.”

Concerning the free offer, we find we cannot agree with Mr. Gay at all despite his arguments.

On particular redemption he is exceedingly clear – and brave! Mr. Gay makes it clear that most present-day professed Calvinists believe that though redemption was intended only for the elect, the Saviour having died there is a sufficiency in it for all. It is surprising how many (including some eminent divines from the past) hold this position. We agree entirely with Mr. Gay that it is impossible to square this view with a belief in substitution and with the paying of a price. We say he is brave in this as so many who call themselves Reformed will disagree with him.

A good portion is devoted to refuting Amyraldism, and considerable mention is made of Mr. Gay's correspondence with Dr. Alan Clifford of Norwich, the well-known Amyraldist. Mr. Gay defines Amyraldism as: "God the Father intended and designed the atonement to be universal in that He decreed Christ should redeem the whole world, sufficiently for all on condition that they believe, but effectively only for the elect. God, therefore, had a twofold will, purpose or intention in redemption" (page 46).

One interesting point that comes out (as has often been mentioned): that Andrew Fuller personally himself never really preached Fullerism!

In many ways a fascinating book – but we cannot see how the author can reconcile the two: particular redemption and the free offer.

The Preaching of Jonathan Edwards, by John Carrick; hardback; 465 pages; price £17; published by The Banner of Truth Trust and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was a friend of George Whitefield, and a preacher and theologian of international acclaim. He was born at Windsor, Connecticut, U.S.A., and educated at home by his father. When almost thirteen years old, he entered Yale College, which was founded in 1701. He completed his three-year course and preached in New York for eight months in 1722-23. He was elected to the tutorship at Yale College in May 1724 where he continued for two years.

In February 1727 he was appointed assistant pastor to his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, at Northampton, who had instituted what became known as "halfway communion," allowing children of baptized parents to come to the Lord's table whether they gave any evidence of being converted or not. Solomon Stoddard died in November 1729, and Jonathan Edwards became increasingly concerned at this decision, as he believed in strict communion. He tried as pastor to change the qualification for communion to converted persons only, but this was strongly resisted, mainly by his cousins, the outcome being his dismissal as pastor by the church and congregation on June 22nd, 1750.

He accepted an invitation to be pastor of a church at Stockbridge which was in the backwoods with a high proportion of the congregation being native Indians. Some of the white people in the church also opposed him, and he had many troubles. He remained at Stockbridge for six years, when he accepted, after much deliberation, the office of President of Princeton College. He never lived to take up these new duties, however, as he was inoculated against smallpox, but contracted and died of that disease on March 22nd, 1758.

The Holy Spirit blessed his preaching to the conversion of many in the "Northampton Revival" of 1734-35 and also in the "Great Awakening" in New England in 1740-42. He wrote details of his own spiritual experience in 1740 entitled a "Personal Narrative" which the late Robert Kinderman recommended to me about fifty years ago.

John Carrick's book deals mainly with homiletics, or the art of preaching. In doing so, he tries to put Jonathan Edwards' preaching and writing in their historical and theological context. He points out Edwards' Puritan style of preaching in what was then called the age of enlightenment (or of human reason). He also lists what he calls his rhetorical armoury, which are the chapter headings in the book, i.e. Introductions, Conclusions, Imagery, Repetition, Exclamation, Use of Scripture, Motives, Style, Delivery, etc. There are twenty-eight chapters

which include many quotations from his sermons and works illustrating the points raised. The layout of the book would be helpful for a theological student, and it also gives an introduction to homiletics, but a spiritually-hungry soul would prefer the true grain to these husks (however important husks may be in the growth of the grain).

One point your reviewer noticed in chapter 1, "The Edwards' Legacy," where we read, "Edwards' influence amongst the Particular (or Calvinistic) Baptists in England ... was powerful and salutary. It was, notes Hindmarsh ... that Andrew Fuller and others began to read Edwards" ... "A new spirit of optimism and expectancy arose in Baptist circles ... and the tendency towards stagnation produced by the Hyper-Calvinism of earlier decades gave way to an evangelical Calvinism" (page 3). Interestingly (page 328) gives a definition of Hyper-Calvinism in chapter 20, "The Use of Exhortation." "It is sometimes objected that an insistence upon the use of the imperative mood ... supposedly, exhortation implies ability; but man, it is noted, is characterized by total inability. Thus, allegedly, inability precludes exhortation.... Such objections lie at the heart of the Hyper-Calvinistic position."

I have never heard such a doctrine expounded in Gospel Standard pulpits!

This book is interesting, at times tedious, but it is a good introduction to the sermons and works of Jonathan Edwards.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

TREADING THE WINEPRESS ALONE

"Mighty to save."

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?"

"I have trodden the winepress alone."

Behold! the mighty Saviour comes
From Edom's hostile plains;
A crimson vesture He assumes,
And blood His raiment stains.

From Bozrah glorious He appears,
His robes with victory shine,
Complete salvation, lo! He wears,
With majesty divine.

Why thus arrayed, Almighty God,
In vests of purple glow;
With garments dyed in streams of blood,
That from the winepress flow?

"The winepress I Myself have trod,
And with Me there was none;
Your strength and your salvation stood
Complete in Me alone."

When not an angel's strength could bear
The vengeance of a God,

Then did the Son of Man appear
In garments rolled in blood.

Alone He stood, alone He fell,
Alone the Conqueror rose;
Alone He burst the bars of hell,
And trampled on His foes.

John Peacock (1731-1803)

OBITUARY

Jan Wouter de Vogel, member of the church at Jireh, Attleborough, passed away on July 8th, 2007, aged 48.

He was born on August 30th, 1958 in Dirksland, Holland, the eldest child of Wouter and Pietje de Vogel. John, as his English friends knew him, was brought up to attend the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk in Melissant, where his parents are members.

John was born with a hole in the heart, which necessitated surgery in order that his life might be saved. Mercifully his life was spared during his early years. At the age of fourteen, he nearly drowned when he fell into deep water, not being able to swim. Again, mercifully rescued, his life was preserved. This incident led to his feeling convinced that he was a sinner deserving hell, his need of salvation, and that he had to pray to the Lord for mercy.

During his teenage years his convictions varied until about the age of seventeen, when he was led into deeper conviction of his sin, which kept him awake at night, being afraid to go to sleep lest his life be taken.

The Lord in His mercy spoke to him during the ministry of the Word when he heard a sermon preached from Esther chapter 5 where the golden sceptre was held out to Queen Esther, allowing her to draw near to the king. John felt that the Lord Jesus Christ had held out the sceptre to him assuring him of the forgiveness of his sins and his salvation at the last.

At other times Psalms 42 and 103 were made a blessing to him and on another occasion he felt powerfully to be included in Christ's prayer in John chapter 17.

In 1992, John's wife Helen gave birth to a stillborn child, which was a great trial to them both. John was blessed in reading Psalm 22, believing the soul of the baby was in glory.

John was exercised about moving to England for some considerable time. He had many responsibilities in his home country of Holland and many were the obstacles that appeared to be preventing such a move. However, the burden increased, and in 1994 he sought the direction of the Lord in this matter. A number of answers were given to him, which confirmed to him that the Lord would make a way.

John came to England on holiday searching for employment; however this proved to be unsuccessful. On returning home to Holland, he received a *Gospel Standard* in which an advertisement appeared for a post in England. He felt that this was of the Lord and responded to the advert. He was asked to come for an

interview, which resulted in him becoming more acquainted with the type of work and people involved. During his journey home he went to Croydon and heard Mr. Joseph Rutt preach from Psalm 45. 10: "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house." This was confirmation to him that he must move to England, a considerable undertaking for John, having a wife and nine young children at the time.

He also clearly saw the Lord's hand in finding a suitable house in Nuneaton and also in the sale of his house in Holland.

John had many concerns over the ordinance of believers' baptism, having been brought up to believe in infant baptism. He himself was baptized [sprinkled] as an infant in Holland and so were those of his children who were born in Holland. Much conflict arose in his mind on this matter even before he moved to England. However, on a visit to England in the spring of 1995, John witnessed Mr. Michael Hydon being taken through the ordinance of believers' baptism at Jireh, Attleborough. The service was taken by Mr. David Ashworth, and at the close of the service he stated that, "We have done that which is commanded and still there is room." This forcibly entered into John's heart and showed him that this was indeed the Lord's way. On moving to England in July 1995, he and his family started to attend Jireh Particular Baptist Chapel in Attleborough.

On one Lord's day, John was greatly exercised about being baptized and joining the church, and prayed that He would constrain His servant, Mr. Farley, to speak about a door being opened which no man could shut. Mr. Farley's text that day was Revelation 3. 8: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name." John knew that he must come before the church and was accepted for baptism. He was baptized on October 7th, 1995 by Mr. A.G. Randalls and joined the church at Jireh.

On a personal note I must say that as I got to know John, I was deeply impressed by his faith and walk. He had very strong, one might even say, black and white views, but he could always back these up from Scripture. He knew and loved his Bible well and often compared the Dutch translation and the English King James version.

John started to feel unwell in November 2006 and over the next few months underwent various tests and investigations, culminating in a diagnosis in February 2007 of myelofibrosis. This is a rare condition affecting the bone marrow with the only effective treatment being a bone marrow transplant, and the best match would have been one of John's siblings. However, neither his brother nor three sisters were compatible. Much prayer went up on his behalf and a search of the bone marrow registers was undertaken. This found three possible donors. However, during this period John became unwell and was admitted to hospital on June 13th, 2007. He was never well enough to receive a bone marrow transplant despite the best efforts of the doctors. He had blood cells brought across from Birmingham to the hospital in Coventry each night for two weeks. However, this had no effect on his immune system and he grew steadily worse.

During the last weeks of his life, whilst in hospital, John was visited by his parents, brother and sisters who came over from Holland. On a visit to John in hospital, his father asked him if it would be well with his soul if he was not to survive his illness. He was able to say that he felt that it would be.

John was favoured in his stay in hospital in that one of the nurses attending him feared the Lord and read his Bible to him when she was able to.

When the family had been given the sad news from the doctors that they could do nothing more for him, his two eldest sons went in to him and read Psalm 23, which they had read often during his illness. On reading the verse, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me," John being unable to speak clearly nodded his head. This was a comfort to them at this sad time. Then when all the family was gathered round his bed, his eldest son read Psalm 23 again, and then another of his sons read Revelation 21. 1: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." At this John took his last breath and we have that good hope that he did indeed see that "new heaven."

So all the attempts of the medics failed and John was called home on Lord's day, July 8th, 2007. His wife and immediate family were with him when he passed away.

The funeral was held on July 17th, 2007 and was taken by Mr. Andrew Randalls who had baptized him at Jireh Particular Baptist Chapel. The coffin was borne into the chapel by his four eldest sons, his brother and myself. During his last days, hymn 173 from Gadsby's, "Christ a Sanctuary," was made a special blessing to him. This was sung at the service and we have that good hope that John is with his Sanctuary.

"He from the grave my dust will raise;
I in the heavens will sing His praise;
And when in glory I appear,
He'll be my Sanctuary there."

We pray that John's walk and conduct may be a witness to those of us who remain and remember.

N.T.S.

NEW MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A new magazine entitled *Perception*, aimed at the age group 16-25, is to be published by the Gospel Standard Magazine Committee. Mr. John Broome has been appointed Editor, and the first issue will appear in March, if the Lord will, and then every three months. Order forms are included with this month's *Gospel Standard*.

The March issue contains articles on: the New King James Version; Computers and the Internet; Marriage – What the Bible Teaches; Robert Bruce (the Scottish preacher); Extracts from Philpot and Oliver Cromwell; Book Reviews; and Current Events.

This 32 page magazine is beautifully produced, with four-tone colour cover. We pray that God's blessing may rest on the magazine and the Editor.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MARCH 2009

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

THE SNOW AND THE THAW

The ice and snow we lately saw,
Which covered all the ground,
Are melted soon before the thaw,
And can no more be found.

Could all the art of man suffice
To move away the snow,
To clear the rivers from the ice,
Or make the waters flow?

No, 'tis the work of God alone;
An emblem of the power
By which He melts the heart of stone,
In His appointed hour.

All outward means, till He appears,
Will ineffectual prove;
Though much the sinner sees and hears,
He cannot learn to love.

But let the stoutest sinner feel
The softening warmth of grace;
Though hard as ice, or rocks, or steel,
His heart dissolves apace.

Feeling the blood which Jesus spilt,
To save his soul from woe,
His hatred, unbelief and guilt
All melt away like snow.

Jesus, we in Thy name entreat,
Reveal Thy gracious arm;
And grant Thy Spirit's kindly heat,
Our frozen hearts to warm.

John Newton (1725-1807)

THE ICE AND SNOW

“For He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth” (Job 37. 6).

The month of February witnessed the heaviest snowfalls we have seen for many years. Whenever the snow comes, we stand amazed once more at the greatness, the omnipotence, the sovereignty of God. He speaks, the snow falls, and the whole country in a few hours is paralysed (“He seaeth up the hand of every man” – referring to the snow in Job 37. 7). Plans have been made, by rich and poor alike, and in a moment they are frustrated. God is in control. God will have the last word. Man’s thoughts are overturned.

God alone can do this. Elihu, speaking to Job, calls it one of the “great things” He doeth, “which we cannot comprehend.” The psalmist refers to it as God’s sovereign commandment: “He sendeth forth His commandment upon earth: His word runneth very swiftly. He giveth snow like wool” (Psa. 147. 15, 16).

“He *saith* to the snow, Be thou on the earth.” Almighty God has only to speak, and the thing is done. So it was in creation. Creation was an easy thing. “He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” Not only men and women, and living creatures, but even inanimate things obey the voice of the Lord – fire, hail, snow, vapour, stormy winds, beasts and cattle, flying fowl (Psa. 148. 8-11) – as well as “kings of the earth, and all people.”

“Creatures of every sort and kind
Are *all* at Thy control;
The God that fills immensity
Must reign from pole to pole.”

On this the Puritans commented that if even the snow obeys God’s commandment, what a rebuke to sinners, and especially to the people of God, when they disobey!

God sends the snow both in judgment and in mercy. We think of both Napoleon and Hitler crushed by the severe Russian winter. We think also of some of the wonderful accounts in the old magazines – such as a poor widow in great danger having her house hidden by a deep fall of snow. In the same way the Lord sends forth His Word to sinners, either in judgment or mercy, and “His Word runneth swiftly.”

When we think of “the treasures of the snow,” we cannot help remembering the use the Holy Spirit has made in comparing the washing away of sin to the purity and whiteness of the snow. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isa. 1. 18). What matchless condescension for Almighty God to reason with a guilty sinner! But what a witness to the wonderful efficacy of the blood of Christ!

“That sacred stream, from Jesus’ veins,
Was free to take away
A Mary’s or Manasseh’s stains,
Or sins more vile than they.”

But David speaks of being “*whiter* than snow.” “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” What can be whiter than snow? We have awakened to see everything covered with snow; nothing could be whiter. But by the end of the day, where people have walked and where cars have driven, everything is tarnished. “Whiter than snow” – “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” – past, present and to come.

But if we see the power of God in the coming of the snow, so we do in its disappearance. What efforts do men use to clear the roads and streets of the snow! But one day God sends the thaw, and quickly the snow and ice disappear. To this the psalmist refers when, after speaking of snow, frost and ice, and commenting, “Who can stand before His cold?” he adds, “He sendeth out His Word, and melteth them: He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow” (Psa. 147. 18).

Till then, what are the best efforts of men? “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?” (Job 38. 31.) How we should like to free ourselves from the ice and the bitterly cold weather! But this is God’s prerogative. And as in nature, so in grace.

“He sendeth out His Word, and melteth them: He causeth His wind [the south wind] to blow, and the waters flow” – the thaw. The old divines used to comment on how there is mention of the Word and the wind together, and how this is so in grace. The Word and the Holy Spirit – not the one without the other – accomplishing the great work.

By nature man’s heart is harder than the ice, nor can anything move it but the power of God when in the riches of His grace He takes away the heart of stone and gives the heart of flesh. But how often the child of God mourns the coldness of his condition and his heart as hard as ice! Then the glorious remedy, when the Lord “melted them,” and when He causes “the waters to flow.” Well might Newton say:

“Feeling the blood which Jesus spilt,
To save his soul from woe,
His hatred, unbelief and guilt
All melt away like snow.”

Should the best and holiest man on earth have but his secret sins every day written on his forehead, it would not only make him blush, but it would make him pull his hat over his eyes, or cover his face with a double scarf.

Thomas Brooks

OVERCOME – YET OVERCOMING

Sermon preached by Ralph Erskine at Stirling in June 1740.

This sermon has been shortened.

Text: “Gad, a troop shall overcome him; but he shall overcome at the last” (Gen. 49. 19).

Jacob is here upon his deathbed making his will; and though the eyes of his body were become dim, yet the eye of his mind was enlightened to see what would befall his children, and to prophesy their lot. The twelve sons of Jacob were men of renown, but the twelve tribes of Israel that descended from them, and were denominated by them, were yet more renowned. We find their names upon the gates of the new Jerusalem.

From the third verse of the chapter we have the predictions concerning each tribe. This verse is concerning Gad and the prediction is in allusion to the name Gad, which signifies a troop. Jacob foresaw that they were to be a warlike tribe, and so we find they were: “The Gadites,” it is said, were “men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains” (1 Chron. 12. 8). He foresaw that the situation of that tribe, on the other side Jordan, would expose it to the excursions of the neighbouring enemies, the Moabites and Ammonites. And here two things are told about them.

1. Something for their humiliation, to prevent their pride. “A troop shall overcome him.” That they might not be puffed up with their strength and valour, they are told that the troops of their enemies should in many skirmishes overcome them: “A troop shall overcome him.”

2. Something for their consolation: to prevent their discouragement by their defeat, he assures them that they should “overcome at the last,” which accordingly was fulfilled when, in Saul’s time and David’s, the Moabites and Ammonites were wholly subdued. See for this, 1 Chronicles 5. 18-22: “The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, were four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore, that went out to the war. And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab. And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and He was intreated of them; because they put their trust in Him. And they took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men an hundred thousand. For there fell down many slain, for the war was of God. And they dwelt in their steads until the captivity.” Thus it

was accomplished what Jacob here foretold of Gad, “A troop shall overcome him; but he shall overcome at the last.”

Now this, together with all other scriptures, is given for our instruction, and represents the case and lot of God’s church and people to the end of the world. Hence I deduce the following observation.

Doctrine: “That the Israel of God may for a time be baffled, vanquished, and defeated by troops of enemies and oppositions, yet they shall be victorious at last.”

Thus grace in the soul is frequently foiled in its conflicts; troops of corruption overcome it. But the cause is God’s, and grace will, in the issue, come off a conqueror; yea, more than a conqueror (Rom. 8. 37).

Instances in Scripture of the defeat and conquest of God’s people are many. Jacob seemed to be defeated, so as he was obliged to fly from the face of Esau, but he defeated him at last. Joseph was defeated by a troop of false, cruel brethren, and mighty oppositions, but he overcame at the last. Israel was many times overcome by troops of enemies, but they overcame at last. Christ, the Captain of salvation, seemed to be overcome for a while by troops and armies of assaulting oppositions from heaven, earth and hell, by which He was brought down to death, but He was victorious, and overcame at last.

Here we may touch a little, through divine aid, at the following heads of method:

I. At the foils which the Israel of God meet with, and show what are the troops that defeat them in this world, and how far the troops may overcome them.

II. Speak a little of their victory, and how they may be said to overcome at last.

III. Offer some reasons of the doctrine, showing why they are many times overcome, and why they shall overcome at last.

I. We are to speak of the foils which the Israel of God meet with in this world. And I am here to observe two things:

1. What are the troops that overcome the Israel of God in this world? To this we reply in the following particulars:

i. There is a troop of lusts and corruptions, by which they are many times defeated: “Iniquities prevail against me,” says David (Psa. 65. 3). This is a numerous troop, comprehending innumerable vain thoughts and vile imaginations, besetting and besieging the soul in time of hearing, praying, communicating and every religious duty. This troop is a body of sin, that makes the Israel of God to cry out sometimes with Paul, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7. 24).

ii. There is a troop of ungodly men in the world, that they have to fight with, and that sometimes overcome them: “Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation” (Psa. 43. 1). This is a troop

that many times bears down the work of God in a church and the work of God in the heart. As it was with Israel of old, so it is with the church in all ages: she is never without enemies that annoy her; sometimes the tyrant, by heart-hatred and open persecution; the atheist, by profaneness of life; the heretic, by corruption of doctrine; and the hypocrite, by mere pretences to holiness.

iii. There is a troop of devils that annoys and defeats them, while they wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers (Eph. 6. 12). The devil and his instruments are the troops of hell that surround them, and armies from the bottomless pit that assault them, and throw many fiery darts of temptation at them.

iv. There is a troop of officers in church and state, members of courts and judicatories, civil or ecclesiastic, that sometimes fall heavily upon them [referring to things in Scotland at that time]. Thus Christ warns His disciples that they will be delivered up to councils, and scourged in synagogues, and be brought before governors and kings, for His sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles (Matt. 10. 17). And He warns them not to be offended, saying, "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16. 2).

I might here mention many troops and armies of oppositions they may meet with, such as a troop of earthly cares and vexations, a troop of hellish snares and temptations, a troop of grievous trials and tribulations, and cross dispensations that may attack and overcome them. But I hasten to show,

2. How far the troop may overcome them. I shall mention four degrees of victory that the troop of enemies and opposers may obtain over them.

i. The troop may overcome them so far as to bring them to distress and great bondage, as Israel was under in Egypt, and in the days of Nehemiah, when he said, "Ye see the distress we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste" (Neh. 2. 17). The child of God may be brought to David's prayer: "O bring me out of my distresses" (Psa. 25. 17); a troop hath overcome me, and brought me into distress; O bring me out!

ii. The troop may overcome them so far as to bring them to discouragement and disquietude, as well as distress. Thus it was with David when troops of sin and iniquity had defeated him, and gone over his head: "I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart" (Psa. 38. 8). A man may be outwardly distressed, and not inwardly disquieted; but then he is greatly defeated, when he is greatly disquieted.

iii. A troop may overcome them so far as to bring them to despair; this is yet a sorer defeat, when the church or child of God is so far vanquished and overcome as to say, "My strength and my hope is

perished from the Lord: remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall” (Lam. 3. 18). So far were the disciples overcome with the troop of temptation when their Lord was dead and buried, that their hope was giving up the ghost, when they said, “We trusted that it had been He that should have redeemed Israel”; but now, might they say, We find ourselves mistaken; our hope is gone. O what a great victory does the enemy gain when the Israel of God are brought to despair!

iv. A troop may overcome them so far as to bring them to death, to the sentence of death, and to death itself. To the sentence of death, as it was with the apostle: “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). Yea, to death itself, and actual killing: “Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think he doeth God service” (John 16. 2). And thus you read of the killing of the witnesses (Rev. 11. 7). The children of God may be so defeated and overcome, as in a spiritual sense to be killed, dead and buried, and have the gravestone laid upon them, as it was upon their glorious Captain. Thus the church cries, “They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me” (Lam. 3. 53). Alas ! how has a troop overcome them! when they are saying, “Behold, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts” (Ezek. 37. 11). And as it is, “Our bones are scattered at the grave’s mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth” (Psa. 141. 7).

Thus a troop may overcome them so far as to bring them to distress, discouragement, despair and death. And O Sirs, where is the Christian that is not conquered many a time by a troop of inward corruptions, or outward temptations, or both? Where is the tribe of Israel that may not be named by the tribe of Gad? “A troop shall overcome them.” How does the enemy overcome their faith, overcome their hope, overcome their patience, overcome their courage and comfort, and dash them down to the ground? So much of their foils.

II. The second thing proposed was, To speak of their victory: “They shall overcome at last.” As did Gad, so shall all the true Israel of God. Here it may be considered, how they overcome, and when they overcome; or in what respects they may be said to overcome at last.

1. How they shall overcome. I name six means by which they effectuate [accomplish] this.

i. They overcome by knowledge. “The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits” (Dan. 11. 32). And particularly by getting the knowledge of and acquaintance with the Captain of salvation, having abandoned their old general, the devil, under whose standard all the children of men by nature wage war against God; but now, by the

knowledge of Christ, they are strong and do exploits; for by Him strengthening them, they can do all things. They overcome by the knowledge of the warfaring life of the Christian, so as to be resolved upon this life, and not to be always lying in a bed of ease. By the knowledge of the nature of the war, that it is spiritual, and that the weapons of it are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, etc., and by the knowledge of the necessity of new recruits of grace and strength from Jesus Christ.

This knowledge comprehends acquaintance also with the opposite interest and parties concerned in the war; how it is grace on the one side and corruption on the other; Christ on the one side and the devil and the world on the other; the dragon and his angels against Michael and his angels. It is necessary in order to overcome that the soldier know his friends and foes. It comprehends also a knowledge both of the power and policy of the enemy, and of the power and wisdom of the Captain to counteract the enemy. "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."

ii. They overcome by faith. "This is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5. 4). The lusts of this world and the god of this world are thus overcome: "Whom resist steadfast in the faith"; "Above all, taking the shield of faith." By faith we wax valiant in fight (Heb. 11. 34). Faith hath a sister that is called Hope, and they are both joined together as part of the Christian armour (1 Thess. 5. 8), where faith serves for a breastplate, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

iii. They overcome by love; this is also joined with that same faith. "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love" (1 Thess. 5. 8). Love is a very strong piece of armour that can go through troops of oppositions; "Love is strong as death," etc. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song 8. 6, 7).

iv. They overcome by the means of prayer: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26. 41). This weapon ye find among the rest: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Eph. 6. 18). This weapon Paul used when a troop invaded him and a messenger from Satan attacked him: "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice." The prayerless man is a vanquished man, but as long as a man can pray in faith and in the spirit, he is armed against the devil and his troops. It is best wrestling against sin and Satan, fighting on our knees; but cease praying, and victory is gone.

v. They overcome by the blood of Christ, in a special manner: "They overcame ... by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12. 11). This is the principal weapon, without which the rest are useless. It is the blood of

Christ that satisfies justice, purchases victory, cleanses from all sin and washes away enemies as a flood. It is the blood of Christ that poisons the old serpent and destroys Satan's power. When Satan bruised the heel of the woman's Seed, Christ, the promised Seed, gave the serpent's head a blow, as it were, with his bloody heel, and broke the devil's head therewith; for by death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

vi. They overcome by the Word, which is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6. 17). Hence Christ repels Satan still with this word: "It is written, it is written." "I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you; and ye have overcome the wicked one" (See 1 John 2. 14). Are ye assaulted with the troops of temptation? Then call to mind God's word of command, His word of threatening, His word of promise. You may do thus, and thus, says Satan; no, but say you, So and so hath God commanded. There is no harm, says Satan; nay, but, say you, So and so hath God threatened. You will be nothing the better for your religion, says Satan; nay, but, say you, So and so hath God promised. Is sin and corruption strong? Then plead the promise, saying, as it is, Hast thou not said that Solomon shall reign? and, behold Adonijah hath usurped the throne (1 Kings 1. 13). Thus they overcome.

These two weapons, the blood of Christ and the Word, are joined together: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the Word of their testimony" (Rev. 12. 11). By cleaving zealously to the cause of truth, they were helped to convince their beholders, and confound their enemies, to confirm their friends, and so overcome the troop of opposers.

2. When they overcome, or in what respects they may be said to overcome at last. These six things are here imported.

i. The partial victory they obtain in time with the enemy, when the Lord returns to them, and faith gets up its head, and their spiritual armour is exercised.

ii. The final and full victory they obtain at death and judgment, when, as the last enemy to be destroyed is death, so death itself shall be swallowed up in victory. They "shall overcome at last," it imports,

iii. A gradual victory; or that to which they come by various degrees, risings and fallings, hopes and fears; yet by little and little, as the Lord drove out the Cannanites before Israel.

iv. A difficult victory, that is not obtained till the last, after much ado; for, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." They must force their way all along to the very last. It imports,

v. A mysterious victory, wherein they conquer, even when conquered; and by being overcome, do overcome; as Christ by death

destroyed death, so they, by being conquered, do conquer; when by their foils they are excited to fight more courageously, and by their falls they are made more circumspect, more humble, tender, wary and watchful. Thus "they overcome at the last."

vi. It imports a certain victory in the issue: "He shall overcome at the last," however uncertain at first, it seems to be; yea, and not only dubious, but desperate like, when troops of enemies overcome them; yet He that promises the victory will give it to them, and make them ascribe it only to Him, saying, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15. 57).

In a word, they may be said to overcome at last when, however weak, yet out of weakness they are made strong (Heb. 11. 34). When, after grievous dashes, they recover new strength, and so go from strength to strength till they appear before the Lord in Zion (Psa. 84. 7). When in extremity they are helped with surprising auxiliaries [assistance] from heaven, so that it may be said, "Jehovah-Jireh, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will provide." When, in the heat of the battle, the Lord makes Himself known by His ancient name, "Jehovah-nissi, The Lord their banner." When He shows Himself a present help in time of trouble, when all other helps and assistance is gone: "For the Lord shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left" (Deut. 32. 36). When, though the enemy prevails, yet they keep the field; and when, though they lose many battles, yet they gain the war. Then, and in these respects they may be said to overcome at last.

III. The third thing proposed was, To offer the grounds of the doctrine. And here also, there are two things to be evidenced:

1. Why it is so ordered of God that His people, while on earth, should be thus foiled, defeated and overcome?

i. It is so ordered for the honour of God's perfections. That His wisdom may appear in leading them through the midst of their enemies; His power in enabling their dead men to rise and regain the conquest, and overleap a wall; His faithfulness in bringing them through fire and water to a wealthy land, according to His Word; and His goodness in not suffering them to be tempted above what they are able, nor always trampled upon.

ii. It is so ordered for the exercise of their graces and of their spiritual arms; yea, He suffers them to be defeated, notwithstanding their arms, that they may learn not to trust to their graces and borrowed armour, but to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

iii. It is to make their victory the more remarkable, and their heaven the more sweet, where they shall sing an eternal song of victory over all their enemies; and that while they are by the way, every new victory they

obtain may be the more sweet, glorious and wonderful; when, after they were dashed and conquered, they become conquerors.

iv. It is so ordered that there may be a conformity between them and their Head, their Captain; for they are predestinated to be conformed to His image, both in sufferings and glory. Now He was made perfect through suffering: by death He overcame death; by being overcome, He overcame.

v. It is so ordered to make them humble and dependent; humble in the sense of their own weakness, while they cannot stand before the enemy without being foiled and overcome; the devil, the world and corruption being too strong for them; and that they may learn to live a life of faith and dependence upon their powerful General.

vi. Hence it is thus ordered to help their memory: “Slay them not, lest My people forget” (Psalm 59. 11). Slay not the enemy, says God, but rather let them slay and overcome, lest My people forget their prayers, and forget My promise, and forget what they have ado for Me, and what I have ado for them; lest they forget to watch, and wait, and keep under My standard.

2. Why they shall overcome at last. Their victory is sure.

i. Because their Head has overcome; their Captain hath conquered all their enemies, and spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in His cross (Col. 2. 15); and He is exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come (Eph. 1. 21). And therefore they may be convinced of judgment, and of victory, because the prince of this world is judged.

ii. Because their Captain heads them, and goes before them in the van: “The Breaker is come up before them ... and their King shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them” (Mic. 2. 13). How can they but have success in the issue, the Angel of God going before them, as with Israel of old?

iii. They shall overcome at last, because the Captain follows them, and not only leads the van, but also brings up the rear. “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” (Isa. 52. 11, 12); that is, God will both lead their van and bring up the rear, securing them from enemies that either meet them, or follow them; for, “With His favour will He compass them.” God’s presence with His people will be that to them, which the pillar of cloud was to Israel, both behind and before them. See Isaiah 58. 8: “Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward.” Christ, thy righteousness, before thee as thy van-guard; and the glory of God, Christ, the rereward, in whom God’s

glory shines, and on whom alone we can depend, when our sins pursue us, and are ready to take hold upon us, and when we are pursued by any other enemy.

iv. They shall overcome at last, because their enemies are Christ's enemies. "I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries" (Exod. 23. 22). The troops that overcome them are the troops of hell, that fight against the God of heaven, and therefore they shall not always prevail: when God arises, His enemies shall be scattered (Psa. 68. 1). "Moab shall be destroyed ... because he hath magnified himself against the Lord" (Jer. 48. 42).

v. Because His honour is engaged, His glory is concerned. It is said once and again, nay a fourth time, in the twentieth chapter of Ezekiel, He fought, or wrought for His name's sake (ver. 9, 14, 22, 44). And, indeed, when His name and glory is concerned, He has more to lose than they, in case they should not overcome at last. They would but lose their life, their soul, their salvation; but He would lose His truth, His honour, His glory, which is infinitely greater. Therefore, they shall overcome at last.

vi. Because they have more for them than against them: their name is Gad, a troop; a company of two armies; yea, they have many troops and regiments on their side; and, if our eyes were open, according to Elisha's prayer (2 Kings 6. 17), we might see mountains full of chariots and horses of fire before the Israel of God. I will name ten regiments or (to keep by the words of the text) troops they have upon their side, by which they cannot fail to overcome at last.

1. The greatest and strongest is a troop of divine attributes surrounding them, as the mountains are about Jerusalem (Psa. 125. 2). And hence, the place of their defence is said to be the munition of rocks; attributes of God, like rocks of defence about them. It is under the shadow of these attributes they are safe and victorious; for He sends forth His mercy and truth for that end: "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. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth His mercy and His truth" (Psa. 57. 1, 3). "I am God all-sufficient," says God to Abraham, and so to all his spiritual seed. My wisdom, sufficient for your direction; My power, sufficient for your protection, etc. My grace shall be sufficient for thee; My strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness. How can these that have such troops for them but overcome at last?

2. They have a troop of graces; namely, faith and all the rest, of which Christ hath prayed that they fail not. "I have prayed for thee," says Christ to Peter, "that thy faith fail not." And so He hath prayed that their hope fail not utterly; that their patience fail not; that their love fail

not; that their graces fail not: therefore, corruption shall fall before grace. “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Under that grace of God, that is the fountain of all graces in them.

3. They have a troop of divine offices, and divine officers on their side; Christ the chief Officer, clothed with all saving offices; whether general, as that of a Saviour, Redeemer, Friend and Captain of salvation: or particular, as Prophet, Priest and King, by whom they cannot but overcome at last. And of under-officers, they have a guard about them, represented by Solomon’s life-guard about his bed. “Threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night” (Song 3. 7, 8). These officers, when faithful to their Prince, and armed with the sword of the Spirit, and their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, are helped to defend the Lord’s people from the snares and corruptions of the times, and the troops of corrupt teachers and corrupt judicatories.

4. They have a troop of saints and witnesses on their side. Witnessing saints, in past and present times; witnessing saints, old and late, are spoken of as helpers and encouragers in the holy war; as those spoken of, Hebrews 11, of whom it is said, chapter 12. 1, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking” especially “unto Jesus” – that is, the Head of the witnessing remnant – “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Witnessing saints at present also, so far as they are faithful witnesses for God, will be powerful wrestlers with Him that shall prevail, and through God do valiantly.

5. They have a troop of angels on their side. “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them” (Psa. 34. 6). What havoc did one angel make in the camp of the Assyrians in one night, destroying an hundred fourscore and five thousand! They are all ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, and destructive spirits to their enemies.

6. They have a troop of heavenly luminaries on their side, whenever God pleases to call them to the assistance of His people; even as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. God has made sometimes the stars of heaven, the sun in the firmament, to subserve the design of His people’s overcoming their enemies.

7. They have a troop of earthly creatures on their side. God has sometimes raised up an army of inferior, despicable creatures, frogs, lice, flies and vermin; the most inconsiderable-like insects as a formidable troop to invade the enemies’ camp, and make Israel to overcome, as in

Egypt; for when their ways please the Lord, they are in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field are at peace with them and at war with their enemies (Job 5. 23; Deut. 28. 26, 27).

8. They have a troop or army of prayers on their side, which God, the Hearer of prayers, hath obliged Himself to answer. Both the prayer of their High Priest upon the throne, whom the Father hears always, and who hath prayed for Jerusalem (Zech. 1. 12), and whom God answers with good words, and comfortable words, saying, "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: My house shall be built in it," notwithstanding all opposing enemies. And also the prayers of His people, offered in the faith of acceptance through Christ: these shall be answered, for the Lord hath said it: "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He will appear in His glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer" (Psa. 102. 16, 17). As the prayer of faith hath power with God, so this troop hath sometimes been terrible to His enemies; as to the Scots Queen Mary, that was more afraid of John Knox's prayer than of an army of ten thousand men.

9. They have a troop of promises to side with them, and assure them that they shall overcome at last. Though they be overcome, yet it is promised them that they shall overcome at last: compare Revelation 13. 7: "It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them," with Revelation 17. 14: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful." It is promised, the Lamb shall overcome them, and make His followers overcomers; and, "All the promises of God are Yea and Amen in Christ, to the glory of God"; and therefore, this troop shall overcome for them. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not a jot or tittle of His Word shall fall to the ground."

10. They have a troop of providences, divine providences, however cross in appearance, to bring about their complete victory; for, "All things shall work together for good to them" (Rom. 8. 28); even all the victories that the enemy doth obtain over them. "All these things are against me," said Jacob; and yet they were working for him. All Joseph's troubles, and the afflictions that he met with, were but bringing about his advancement; and, so all the foils and defeats that the believer meets with, contribute to his being victor at last: even all the plots of hell, and rage of men and devils against Christ, contributed to bring about his triumphant victory; so, all His people, however contradicted and conquered, shall overcome at last.

Though a troop overcome them, yet having these numerous troops upon their side, the final victory shall be on their side also.

J.C. Philpot thought Ralph Erskine's sermons "as compositions are almost models of what a sermon should be."

IT IS FINISHED

By Dr. Robert Hawker (1753-1827)

The glorious close of the Saviour's sufferings was now arrived, and full of these high ideas which occupied His holy mind, He cried out, "It is finished."

What is finished? Redemption work is finished. All the long series of prophecies, visions, types and the shadows of good things to come, which pointed to Jesus, and redemption by Him, were now finished in their accomplishment. The law was finished in its condemning power, and the gospel commenced its saving influence. Jesus, by that one sacrifice now offered, had for ever perfected them that are sanctified. The separation between Jew and Gentile was now finished and done away for ever. Jesus had now gathered together, in one, all the children of God which were scattered abroad.

The iron reign of sin and Satan, of death and hell, was now broken in pieces by this Stone cut out of the mountain without hands; and life and immortality, pardon, mercy and peace were brought to light, and secured to the faithful by this finished redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ. That spiritual kingdom of the Lord Jesus, which shall have no end, was from this moment set up. The sure descent of the Holy Ghost was now confirmed, and the Lord Jesus already, by anticipation, beheld His Israel of old and His Gentile church, as well as Ethiopia and the multitude of the isles, stretching forth their hands unto God.

Full of these and the like glorious prospects, the mind of Jesus was filled. And having received the vinegar, as the last prophecy remaining then to be completed, He cried out, "It is finished."

My soul, never let these precious, precious words of Jesus depart from thy mind! Do by them as Moses commanded Israel concerning the words he gave them. Let them be in thy heart and in thy soul, bind them as a sign upon thine hand, and let them be as frontlets between thine eyes. Tell thy God and Father what thy Jesus hath told thee – "It is finished." He hath finished redemption *for* thee; and He will finish redemption *in* thee. He hath destroyed death, both satisfied and glorified the law, taken away the curse, made full restitution for sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness, and opened the glorious mansions of the blessed as the home and rest of all His people.

O my soul, let these dying words of thy Jesus be made by thee as answer to all thy prayers, and begin that song to the Lamb which, ere long, thou wilt fully and loudly sing among the church above: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.

THE TWO COVENANTS

By James Battersby (1823-1899), Vicar of St. James, Sheffield

The subject which I propose to bring before you is one which will require care both on the part of the writer and also on that of the reader, in order that we may have a clear view of the whole matter which shall be treated of. It is not my intention to examine all the covenants which are spoken of in the Scriptures, but those only which have some special bearing upon the subject. I beg to state at the outset that I shall accept the ordinary definition of a “covenant,” that it is a mutual contract, or agreement, between two or more parties. Whether this definition be satisfactory or not as a whole I shall not discuss. Sometimes, in the New Testament, a “covenant” seems to mean a disposition, an arrangement, a testament, or a will. This will appear if you consider the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the word occurs (chapter 9. 16, 17).

There are two covenants of which I shall speak, although not as fully as I should like, for time will not permit. The two covenants are well known as the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Indeed all the covenants named in the Scriptures might be placed under these two heads. And in order that I may present this subject somewhat clearly and briefly to you, I shall ask you to consider in:

The first place these two covenants: the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

Secondly, I shall ask you to notice the different administrations of the covenant of grace.

I. The first point is this: The two covenants; the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace.

What do you understand by the *covenant of works*? This, briefly stated, is that agreement which God made with Adam as the federal head and representative of the whole human family. It was made with him in a state of innocency, holiness and righteousness. The terms of the covenant were perfect obedience on man’s part, and the promise of life and happiness on the part of God. “Do and live.”

He also gave him a test whereby his obedience, or disobedience, should be known or marked. There was the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And God said to him, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2. 17). Or, “dying thou shalt die” (margin). The least failure in, or departure from the terms of the covenant, and the law was transgressed, the mark missed, and death was the awful result. The covenant of works knew nothing of repentance and forgiveness of sins.

The covenant of works had no mediator that could step in between God and the sinner. This is in substance the covenant of works, or, as it has been styled, the “concreation law” – “the law of nature,” and “the

law of works.” I need not dwell upon Adam’s conduct and the fearful consequences; it has been well expressed by our own great poet [Milton]:

“Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe.”

This shall suffice for our views of the covenant of works. And I do hope that you will in no way confound the covenant of works with Adam with the covenant of grace with Christ, nor yet with the covenant which God made with the Israelites when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. The covenant of works was never made with any other person than with Adam. May God help us to dismiss all false ideas from our minds upon this most important subject.

Now for the covenant of grace. What is this covenant of grace? It is that mutual agreement which God the Father entered into with His own dear Son respecting the eternal salvation of all the elect. Christ is the Head and Representative of His family, as Adam was of his family. These headships and their families are contrasted in the 5th of Romans. The witness of the covenant of grace is the Holy Ghost. Jesus Christ is declared to be the very substance of the covenant, especially in the prophet Isaiah: “I will ... give Thee for a covenant of the people” (Isa. 49. 8, and Isa. 42. 6). Here Jesus is the covenant.

He is also spoken of as being the Surety of the covenant. Whatever conditions and obligations there are in it, the Lord Jesus Christ has undertaken to fulfil them all. Jesus is the believer’s guarantee. There is not a single condition or obligation in the covenant of grace which has not been provided for. Contingencies are unknown in Christ. He is the Surety for His people, and He sends forth His Holy Spirit to reveal and unfold the blessings of the covenant in all His redeemed. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant” (Psa. 25. 14).

The Mediator of this covenant is the Lord Jesus Christ. “There is ... one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2. 5). The Man Christ Jesus stands between God and the sinner. He advocates the cause of the sinner with the Father (1 John 2. 1); and speaks a word in season to him that is weary, having the tongue of the learned (Isa. 50. 4).

He is the Messenger and Dispenser of the covenant of grace. He has come from the Father to reveal and make it known to us (Mal. 3. 1). He then sends His Spirit to write it in our hearts (Heb. 8. 10).

He is also the Testator of the covenant. He has ratified it with the shedding of His most precious blood, so that now it is of force and will abide of force for ever. These are some of the truths connected with the covenant of grace, and a wonderful covenant it is, as we should see if we were to consider it more in detail. The perfect obedience of Christ to the

Father's will is the believer's righteousness (John 6. 39; Rom. 10. 4). By the blood of the everlasting covenant prisoners are sent forth from the prison house of sin and death (Zech. 9. 11). All the promises of the covenant are made sure to the spiritual seed in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 1. 20). The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, shall tell them so in due time (John 16. 14, 15).

There are some qualities, properties and excellencies descriptive of the covenant of grace which I cannot pass over. It is of *divine origin*, and has its spring from the eternal fountain of free and sovereign grace (Rom. 11. 6). This covenant is "*holy*" (Luke 1. 72). Jehovah in His dealings with His people always "remembers His *holy* covenant." He is ever mindful of it and has respect to it (Psa. 111. 5; 74. 20). This covenant is *everlasting* and *unalterable*. It stands fast with Christ. It can never be broken. God has said, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips" (Psa. 89. 28, 34).

But this covenant is as *sure* as it is durable. It contains the "*sure* mercies of David." This covenant of peace shall never be removed (Isa. 55. 3; 54. 10). This covenant also contains all the promises and all the blessings which are made over to the children of God in Christ. Hence they are said to be blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" Jesus (Eph. 1. 3). And that "all the promises" to the children of God "are" so many certainties – "yea" – "and" so many fulfilments, "Amen" in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 1. 20).

I think that from the few remarks which I have made upon the two covenants, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, you will have some definite idea of the difference between them. The one made with Adam is in substance, "Do and Live." The other made with Christ is, "Live and do." When I think of these two covenants, and how in preaching they are frequently mixed up and confounded the one with the other, it is necessary at times carefully to discriminate between them. I hope then, my brethren, that you will see one thing clearly, that the covenant made with Adam has failed, and failed for ever, and that all connected with him are wrecked and ruined. The covenant of works is a covenant of death.

The only covenant that will stand, and stand fast for ever, is the covenant of grace made with Christ, as the Head and Representative of all the elect, whose eternal salvation has been secured "according to the eternal purpose" of God "which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3. 11).

There are some things common to the two covenants. Both have God for their Author. Both require perfect obedience. Both promise life. And both have for their end the happiness of man and the glory of Jehovah. Still, in the covenant of works, God is seen a just Sovereign and Lawgiver, whilst man is working to live. In the covenant of grace,

God is seen a just God and Saviour. He is merciful and gracious in His dealings with sinners through the mediatorship of His own dear Son. The covenant of grace is full of tender mercies and lovingkindnesses. But I must proceed.

II. I shall now ask you to notice, in the second place, the different administrations of the covenant of grace. Try to follow me in what I shall say upon the different administrations of the covenant of grace. The different administrations of the covenant of grace might be reduced to two heads: *Before* and *since* the coming of our Lord. Be it understood that the covenant of grace never changes. It is in its very nature unchanged and unchangeable. Its administration may change, and has changed, but the covenant itself is always the same. It is the different administrations of the covenant of grace which will explain some of the expressions in Hebrews, such as, "better covenant"; "new covenant"; the old covenant "decayeth and waxeth old," and is "ready to vanish away."

I shall now try to show you the *administrations* of the covenant of grace before the coming of Christ. In the time of our first parents it was administered chiefly in *promise*. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." This was the gospel preached to Adam according to the covenant of grace made with Christ. It is very probable that sacrifice was also offered soon after the fall of Adam. For we read: "The Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed them" (Genesis 3. 21); this signifying that they could not appear naked before God and be accepted of Him.

Sacrifice was clearly established and accepted of God in the time of Abel. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous" (Heb. 11. 4).

Enoch walked with God, which implies that he had been restored to favour and communion.

Noah had the promise and offered sacrifice. He and his family were mercifully preserved when that terrible overthrow came upon the old world.

The covenant of grace was administered in the time of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob chiefly in promise and sacrifice. And to Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, the one chosen whence the Lord Jesus Christ should spring, it is said: "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise"; "Shiloh," the great peacemaker, shall spring from thee, "and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49. 8, 10).

When we come to the time of Moses, we have a consolidated form of ceremonialism, as given upon Mount Sinai. See the twentieth and three following chapters of the Book of Exodus. Now Moses himself was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, not only as he was a prophet, but also as a mediator. Aaron was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ as a priest;

but then Aaron's priesthood did not abide for ever. The Passover was a lively type of Christ who is our Passover sacrificed for us. There were many types given in the time of Moses, such as the smitten rock sending forth water and following the children of Israel. This was all fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. The manna falling down from heaven was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the true Bread which came down from heaven. The brazen serpent lifted up was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, who should be lifted up for the healing of all those who feel their need of a Saviour.

But the administration of the covenant of grace from the time of Moses to the coming of our Lord seems to have been specially marked by ceremonialism, by priests and sacrifices, and by a cumbrous yoke of ordinances which had to be strictly observed. These continued until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is that administration of the covenant of grace spoken of by the apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as the covenant which was old and ready to vanish away (Heb. 8. 13). The types and ceremonial law of the Mosaic dispensation pointed to Christ. Indeed they were a shadow of good things to come – even of Christ (Heb. 10. 1). The time of reformation arrives (Heb. 9. 9, 10), when the substance shall take the place of the shadow, when prophecies shall be fulfilled, and promise of the covenant enjoyed. The covenant of grace as administered in Mosaic ceremonialism only tended to bondage and slavery. It was weak, beggarly, imperfect, unprofitable and faulty (Heb. 7. 18, 19). This ceremonial yoke must be removed, the handwriting of ordinances must be blotted out, and the way must be cleared for the glorious administration of the covenant of grace in liberty, holiness and righteousness.

I shall give you one quotation from the eighth of Hebrews which describes the difference between the administration of the covenant of grace before and since the coming of Christ. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them ... out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The two covenants mentioned in these verses are but different administrations of the one covenant of grace ordered in all things and sure.

WALKING WITH GOD

An address given by Mr. C.A. Wood on April 11th, 1980

“And Enoch walked with God” (Gen. 5. 24).

Enoch lived in solemn times, days of sin and wickedness, described in the next chapter: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” It was so in the days of the patriarch Enoch; it is so in the day in which we live. In the midst of this solemn, sad and sinful background, the Word of God sets before us the life of a godly man who walked with God.

One meaning of the name Enoch is “discipline.” It is quite clear from the rich, spiritual experience that he enjoyed, namely the close communion with God, that this dear man knew what it was to be disciplined. God grant to us in these solemn and dark days grace to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. The Lord help us to take the whole armour of God, to stand and to withstand, and to discipline our lives, to separate from all that is evil. Another meaning of this name is “dedicated.” Here was a man dedicated, devoted to the service of God, in love to God, walking with God.

We have four things recorded in the Word of God concerning Enoch. First, he walked with God; then we read that he pleased God; also, that he prophesied; and lastly we read that he was translated that he should not see death.

“For before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” What is the testimony of heaven concerning you and me? The testimony of the world, and even the church, may flatter, but what is the testimony of heaven? What report is there? “Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself.” “Diotrephes loveth to have the pre-eminence.” God deliver us from that. Enoch was a walker and a talker. We need in these solemn days for every true believer in Jesus Christ to be a humble walker, and thereby a witness to “shew forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.” Walk, then talk.

“And Enoch walked with God.” How can it be? “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” In the Garden of Eden, before sin entered, there was no barrier to communion between God and the man that He had created. Sin entered, and God drove out the man, and He set there in the garden of Eden “cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” That communion was broken; man is lost, ruined, dead in trespasses and in sins; and the carnal mind is enmity against God.

How then can man walk with God? Let us stand at the place that is called Calvary, there to view the dear Lord Jesus, eternally the Son of

God, the God-Man, the Lamb of God. "I am the good Shepherd, and the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." Here we see the dear Saviour in the room and place of His dear people, suffering the Just for the unjust. God the Father had "laid on Him the iniquity of us all," the whole election of grace. Therefore at Calvary's cross the dear Lord Jesus suffered. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The triumph of His death, the cry of victory: "It is finished." The work is done; salvation is in it; divine justice is satisfied; and the "veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

"May I sit for ever viewing
 Mercy's streams in streams of blood;
 Precious drops my soul bedewing,
 Plead and claim my peace with God!"

How then can man walk with God? We view the glorious, omnipotent power of the Holy Ghost in the work of grace begun in sinners' hearts. Jesus said, "Ye must be born again." That breath of prayer, that inward groan, that cry to heaven: "God, be merciful to me a sinner." One convinced of sin, stripped of all self-merit, self-righteousness, made feelingly to deserve the wrath of God and to sink into hell, and yet drawn to God by the power of the Spirit, drawn by grace, drawn to plead the Saviour's precious blood. He comes as a poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinner to plead mercy through blood.

"Mercy, through blood, I make my plea;
 O God, be merciful to me!"

He lays hold upon that precious promise: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Here then is the coming sinner, and such will *walk before God*, such will *walk after Him*, and such as are led by the Spirit, blessed with the greatest blessing of all, will *walk with God*.

They will walk *before* God in the fear of the Lord, in love to God. His Word will be their rule, His glory be their aim, in loving obedience to their God. They will pray to be kept from evil, kept from grieving the Holy Spirit, and be very conscious that every thought, word and deed is revealed to God. "Thou God seest me."

It is also to walk *after* Jesus. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." It is to take up that cross, it is to deny self, it is to "go ... unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." It is following, walking after Jesus. It is that His Spirit may be upon us, that men may take knowledge of us that we have been with

Jesus. There is the grace of humility, hearts filled with love, willing to forgive. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

There is a walking after Jesus in the path of temptation, the pathway of reproach. I have thanked God for the rich blessing in the path of sorrow, for the four words in the gospel by Mark, chapter one, and verse 13: "*And He was there,*" setting forth the Saviour in temptation in the wilderness, and with the wild beasts. "And He was there." My friends, that cross will become bearable. There is a glory in it, there is a comfort in it, there is a triumph in it, when you walk in a path like that, for it leads you to this sweet and blessed experience of walking with Him.

To walk *with* God is the place of communion, the place of rest and confidence, leaning on Him. No room for any other. I do not set forth a selfish religion. Such that walk with God, such that are blessed with these blessings, will yearn and travail over the souls of others, and long that those poor sinners without God and without hope may be led into the rich blessings that we enjoy. But to enjoy a close walk with God is a personal, blessed, spiritual experience. "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?" The wonder is that the Beloved came down into the wilderness for this poor sinner, and gave Himself for her, and is not ashamed for her, by His grace, to come up leaning on Him, casting all upon Him – the burden of sin, the weight of a soul, the cares of this life, the temptations of the devil, the reproaches of the world.

Brethren, what are the hindrances to this blessing (and they are many)? *A love of the world*; the world creeps in. One of the greatest dangers that Christian had in the journey, beside the Valley of Humiliation, and of the Shadow of Death, and Vanity Fair, was enchanted ground, the place of ease where Hopeful wished to go to sleep. How our flesh seeks this! God keep us awake, watchful and prayerful. Another hindrance surely, my friends, is *idolatry*. It takes very little for our evil hearts to find a lodging place for an idol, especially in the days of prosperity. God preserve us. Another danger is this terrible evil that is in us – *pride*. O Lord, make us humble; deliver us from this terrible sin. Another hindrance surely is *an unforgiving spirit*. God give us the grace to forgive, and even greater still, to go and confess our faults. O the many things which are solemn barriers and hindrances to the enjoyment of this walk with God!

I come briefly to this word: "He pleased God." Here it may be said, How can a poor sinner please God? The Apostle Peter writes: "If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." *But do make sure we do well*. So many say they do well, but they are at fault. May our conscience be clear before God; so if we do well

and suffer for it, and take it patiently, then it is pleasing to God, because it is by His grace that we do so.

Enoch was also a prophet. His son was Methuselah, and that name means: "When he is gone, it shall come." He prophesied this as a warning 969 years before that prophesy was fulfilled, because it is clear from the Bible that Methuselah died the year the flood came (See Gen. 5. 25, 28; and Gen. 7. 6). Enoch was a prophet. He was shown these blessed secrets of heaven in that close communion with God. In Jude we read: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints." All those years ago we find the revelation of divine truth through Enoch. O we need grace to endure, yet may we "look up, for our redemption draweth nigh."

"Jesus Christ, your Father's Son,
Bids you undismayed go on."

Then, "he was translated that he should not see death." We read this: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." This translation on earth will lead to the sure translation at last, to be with Christ which is far better; to walk with God on earth will be to walk with Him at last in heaven. "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." They are not worthy in themselves, but made worthy in the blood of the Lamb, made worthy by all that Jesus has done for them. They are in white. All their sins are washed away; there is not a blemish, not a stain, not a spot. "Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." We were loved before we were washed; we were not washed, and then loved. Pardon and justification. Garments of white also signify joy, and what joy there will be in glory! Those garments of white are garments of immortality. May the Lord in His mercy grant us grace to follow on.

I close with these words as a prayer expressed by the Lord's servant, the Apostle Peter: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

We wish Mr. Wood a special sense of the Lord's presence now he can no longer preach regularly, and has gone into the Studley Bethesda Home.



GEORGE GORTON'S WIFE

(Concluded from page 52)

"One day I felt very dark and dead, and I said to the Lord, 'Where is my life?' And I immediately received this answer: 'Thy life is hid with Christ in God.' And I thought, 'So it is, and I have been looking for it in myself.' I was groaning and sighing all the night at another time, and next day I spoke to Mrs. Rowe, and told her what I felt. She endeavoured to comfort me, but I could not take it, and was obliged to have recourse to the Word of God. I read Psalm 37, and when I came to the words, 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him,' I thought, 'Often as I have read this psalm, I never observed these words before,' and I felt encouraged by them. That night I went to Mount Zion Chapel, and heard a man of colour from Nova Scotia. His text was: 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' It seemed to me that the text and sermon were both for me. I heard him well, and was relieved of my trouble. He seemed so full of matter, that he was like wine in a bottle wanting vent. Mrs. Rowe told me, as soon as he gave out his text, she thought it was for me, from what I had told her.

"Owing to affliction at this time, and also a cough, the doctor ordered me to keep quiet in my room and out of draughts. On January 6th I could not help praying for my uncle, who was in Jamaica. In the evening they had dancing downstairs, and I was so glad that I was out of it, being confined to my room; and I read with much pleasure a little tract called, *Behold, the Bridegroom Cometh*. The house was not my own; I was boarding; therefore, of course, I could not prevent the dancing.

"I felt a presentiment that I was going to lose all my relations, and I told Mrs. Swallow so. I received a letter just after from France, announcing the death of my aunt Eliza. One morning when I got up, my knees knocked together about my uncle, having a dread on my spirits respecting him, and I expected every packet to hear of his death. However, he lived to come to England, and to go to Scotland. My aunt Clara died about eight months after my aunt Eliza. I was writing a long letter to her, telling her everything I thought would be interesting to her, when there was a knock at my bedroom door, and Mrs. Rowe entered with a letter in her hand, which she had received from Mr. Aubrey, the clergyman at Honfleur, informing her of my aunt Clara's death. He said it would be necessary for a relation to go there, as the British consul had sealed up the things. I was obliged to go, as my uncle, who was the only surviving relative besides myself, was in the north of Scotland.

"The Thursday week before I heard of my aunt Clara's death I was baptized at Shouldam Street. While my uncle and aunt were in England,

my aunt, in conversing with me one day, perceived I approved of adult, or rather Christian, baptism. She said, 'I hope, Eliza, you do not mean to be dipped.' I said it was my intention to be baptized. She said, 'Your uncle will be so grieved.' I answered, 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.' She said, 'They all say that.' However, I had never heard any say so. She said it was not essential to salvation. I said I should not do it because I expected to be saved by it, but because I believed I was saved. She said, 'You were christened when you were a baby, and confirmed when you arrived at a certain age.' I said, 'No; I never was confirmed by man, or I should have been confirmed in unbelief.' She said if everybody saw as I did the Church of England would fall.

"Here our conversation was interrupted by my uncle coming into the room. My aunt informed him of my intention. He said he hoped not, for my chest was so vulnerable that a cold bath might prove fatal to me. Owing to my uncle having told me this, I thought I would not be foolhardy; so when I applied for baptism, I proposed having the water warmed, and Mr. George laughed at it, for he said he had known people in the last stage of consumption baptized, and no ill consequences ensue. I was very much tried about the water after I spoke for baptism, though not many months before I had longed to bathe in the sea when the water was very rough. I begged the Lord to take away that dread, which He was pleased to do; and some who knew how much I had feared were surprised to see me go down the steps so boldly; and when I came out I joined in singing the words which I had chosen:

"Glory, honour, praise and power,
Be unto the Lamb for ever."

The account continues with many changes, sometimes difficult to know whether she was in France, England or Scotland. Her own account ends:

"I remember one time Satan told me I should turn apostate, and this so alarmed me that when I went on my knees to ask the Lord to keep me from apostatising, I trembled from head to foot, and it made me so weak I could scarcely keep off the sofa; but blessed be the Lord, He hath said that where He begins He will carry on and complete until the day of Jesus Christ. Yes! Yes! How sweet the words:

"Grace will complete what grace begins
To save from sorrows and from sins.
The work that wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."

My fears were all chased away when these words came with sweetness: 'There is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off'; and I firmly

believed there would be an end to my soul's exercises and conflicts, and that I should have a peaceful end, my expectations of heaven and glory not cut off."

Here Mrs. Gorton's own account ends. There is no mention of how she came into contact with her husband.

George Gorton continues:

We had been married a little more than seven years, and she has often said she could see the hand of the Lord in all, in bringing us to be united together; also in bringing us to Cheltenham, which is now four years ago, though I never thought of living to see my wife's death, being in such a weak state when I came here. Many, many times we have rejoiced together, and sometimes wept together, and also blessed the Lord for His goodness to us. Some of the friends she felt a great union to, and there were none who knew her, far and near, and conversed with her on spiritual things, but loved her, being persuaded she was one of the Lord's. Amongst these I may name our dear friend the late Mrs. John Gadsby, who visited us, and with whom my wife had some sweet conversation. Mrs. G. several times spoke of it afterwards, and when my wife heard of her death she said, "I did love her. She is gone a little before me. It will not be long before I shall meet her again."

Little did I think the beginning of this year she would so soon be taken by death, she being so long able to go to chapel night and morning, not missing for about nine months. The last Lord's day she was out was the last in December 1871. On the first day of January she was poorly, yet said she hoped to be at chapel the first Sabbath in the new year, and if not in the morning, she hoped to go at night; and then she said the ordinance of the Lord's supper would be administered, as she never liked to miss if able to go; but she was too unwell to go. The next week she got a little better, and came downstairs, and the doctor gave us every encouragement. She began to eat as usual, and got quite well, as we thought, and the doctor left off his attendance. In about a week or ten days she sank again for about a week. After that the doctor said if she would take her wine and beef tea, she would soon be able to get up and come downstairs; but she said it was unto death, and seemed willing to go. She dozed a little, and then said, "Through blood." I answered,

"Mercy through blood I make my plea;
O God, be merciful to me!"

"That's it," she replied. At another time, as she got weaker, she said, "I am *in* the valley now; but He hath said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'" I answered, "He does not bring a soul into the waters and then leave them." She answered, "No, no! Quite through. That's a mercy."

She died a few days later, on February 10th, 1872.

BOOK REVIEWS

Gather Up The Fragments; 150 Years at Providence Chapel, Rotherfield; 98 pages.

Rehoboth Strict and Particular Baptist Church in Bromley: 100 Years of Gospel Witness; 20 pages.

As a denomination we have been favoured over the years with a large number of short chapel histories – accounts of the “long cloud of witnesses” that “marks the same path to heaven.”

We are always pleased when these appear, so we welcome these two new little histories of Rotherfield and Bromley – so different, but each recording the Lord’s work. Both have nice coloured illustrations and Part 2 of Bromley is to appear later. The church at Bromley has had the unusual experience of having to move from place to place.

May the Lord still be with our churches and revive His work in the midst of the years.

Repent and Believe, by Thomas Brooks (94 pages); **Binge Drinking**, by John Flavel (66 pages); each £3.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

These are two more of the new small paperback series of “Pocket Puritans” recently reviewed in the December issue of the *Gospel Standard* magazine. Both Thomas Brooks and John Flavel are well-known Puritans of the seventeenth century who need no introduction.

Repent and Believe is taken from *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices*, and *Binge Drinking* is taken from *A Caution to Seamen, A Dissuasive against Several Horrid and Detestable Sins*.

Of the two, your reviewer preferred the book by Thomas Brooks which is most salutary as the theme of the first part on repentance solemnly warns against the temptation of Satan that repentance is easy. We hope that these booklets will have a ready sale among our young people.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

God’s Light on Dark Clouds, by Theodore L. Cuyler; paperback; 134 pages; price £5; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a good book – in fact, we have never read a better one on the subject of suffering and God’s ability to uphold. In our own sorrows we found it a great help.

Theodore Cuyler’s aim is to fulfil 2 Corinthians 1. 4: “to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” Originally written in 1882, the author, a Presbyterian minister in New York, had just lost his twenty-one-year-old daughter, after losing two infant sons. He thus writes tenderly from a broken heart – so there is none of the cool formality of some of the older divines, neither is there any sickly sentimentality (though somewhat of the “Victorian” style of writing – if that is a correct expression for a minister in the U.S.A.). Neither does he in any way “talk down” to his readers.

So the dedication is right: “To the desponding and bereaved these words of sympathy and cheer are lovingly inscribed,” while the beautiful front cover, a

lovely rainbow breaking through stormy clouds, exactly symbolises the contents of the book.

The twenty-two chapters are each based on a solid scriptural foundation. Thus we have a gracious variety and not the repetition that is often found in books of this kind. (We did find the last two or three chapters seemed to “tail off.” Had the author written all that could be written?)

There are some very beautiful chapters: “Flowers from the Tomb of Jesus”; “Christ Shepherding His Flock”; “The Lord Reigns”; “Up to the Hills.” One specially helpful and well-written chapter is entitled, “Burning the Barley Field.” The reference is to Joab and Absalom in 2 Samuel chapter 14. “Many a reader of this article may have had his barley-field set on fire.” “I honestly believe that many a sick-bed has delivered the sufferer from a bed in perdition.” The Lord destroys our barley-field so that we have to seek our all in Him.

We recommend *God’s Light on Dark Clouds* to those in the pathway of sorrow. We include a few choice sentences as a strong recommendation to our readers (see page 94).

It seems only fair to mention that we felt it unnecessary for the author, commenting on the words, “Take no thought for the morrow,” to enthuse so much about a new translation: “Be not anxious.” From childhood days we had understood this was what the Saviour meant.

A Heart for Africa: The Story of Jean Nicolson – Missionary in Zimbabwe, by Dolina MacCuish; hardback; 229 pages; price £11.50; published by Free Presbyterian Publications, and obtainable from 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LE.

We knew Miss Nicolson. She certainly was a remarkable woman – a life of self-sacrifice, devoted to the Saviour. Miss Nicolson died back in Scotland in the year 2000 at the age of 92. Most of her life was spent in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) in charge of the Mission School there.

A Heart for Africa is not *on the surface* a very spiritual book – but there is a deep foundation lying beneath, constant testimonies to prayer heard and answered, and help in trouble, and dependence on the Lord.

The book embraces the remarkable story of how the Free Presbyterian Church in Scotland was led to set up the mission in Rhodesia. Much emphasis was placed on education, but the great aim in the schools was that the Lord would sanctify the education of the African children, teaching them the knowledge of the truth, and with a desire that the Holy Spirit would bless it in bringing them to saving faith in Jesus.

There are many most interesting (and sometimes exciting) incidents, not least in the adventures of Miss Nicolson’s mother who, when travelling out to Africa to her daughter during the War years, was captured by a German U-boat.

There are many black and white photographs and mention of many people well-known to our readers – including the ministers Mr. Hugh Cartwright, Mr. Donald Ross, Mr. Alfred Macdonald and Dr. Tallach, and also Mr. and Mrs. Neil Murray.

The book is well written, in quite a lively style, and has preserved the faithful memory of an amazing woman – talented, but above all, blessed with the grace of God.

EXTRACTS FROM *GOD'S LIGHT ON DARK CLOUDS*
By Theodore L. Cuyler, 1882 (See Book Reviews, page 92)

There is a great want in all God's people who have never had the education of sharp trial.

There are ... so many lessons that can only be learned through tears, that should God leave a Christian without any trials, He would really leave him to a terrible danger.

Worry is not only a sin against God, it is a sin against ourselves.

When tomorrow comes, grace will come with it, and sufficient for the tasks, the trials or the troubles.

Some of us, at the beginning of a year's work, are tempted to overload ourselves with the anticipation of how much we have to do; we need not worry if we will only remember that during the whole year there will be only one working day, and that is – today. Sufficient to each day is the labour thereof.

There are certain flowers of grace which will bloom upon the grave of Jesus to the end of time.

His road to glory lay through the tomb, and so must ours.

Sometimes we have an experience in life that seems like walking through a long, dark tunnel. We can adopt the plaintive language of the psalmist and cry out, "Thy hand presseth us sore; as for the light of our eyes, it also is gone from us; we are ready to halt, and our sorrow is continually before us."

One of the most trying features of our trial is that we cannot discover the "why" or the "wherefore" of our special afflictions. Our heavenly Father did not consult us before the trial came, and He does not explain to us why He sent it.

To the torturing question, "Why does God lead me into this valley of the shadow of darkness?" we can only reply, "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in Thy sight."

Just in such trying hours it is that the adversary assails us most fiercely. He stirs up in our hearts bitter thoughts against God.

The dark tunnel on the road is just as surely appointed wisely as is the most flowery mead or the happiest walk over the "Delectable Mountains."

It is a keen knife that our divine Gardener employs.

There is so much alloy of pride and self-will, or covetousness, or sinful idolatry in genuine Christians that they require the "fining pot" and the furnace. Sometimes prosperity is tenfold more damaging to us than sharp adversity. A fit of sickness may do more for soul-health than years of bodily strength and comfort.

God owns you and me, and He has a right to do with us just as He pleases.

The "secret things belong unto God." Over certain doors the inscription is affixed: "No admittance here."

Some of God's truths are knocked into us by hard blows, and some lessons are spelled out through eyes cleansed with tears. Our perverse mistake is that we demand that God shall explain Himself at every step, instead of waiting for Him to unfold His intricate purposes at His own time and in His own way.

Never has He promised us an easy road or a smooth road, or such a road as our selfishness may select.

More than once faith stumbles and falls, but He lifts up and restores.

The trial that tests grace and purifies character must be something more than a pin-scratch. It must cut deep, it must try us, and sharply too, or it does not deserve the name.

Brethren of the flock, we may have some hard climbing yet before we reach heaven.

Sudden disappointments can carry us, in an hour, from the heights down to the very depths.

When my little boy dashes off to his play, brimful of glee, he does not stop to think much about his parents; but let him be taken suddenly sick, or an accident befall him, his first thought is to go to his mother.

While presumption is swinging on its spider's web over the perilous precipice, Faith calmly says,

"All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring."

While Unbelief is floundering through the darkness, or sinking in the waves of despair, Faith triumphantly sings,

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
Here, by His love o'ershadowed,
Sweetly my soul doth rest."

This is the theology for times of temptation. Such times are sure to come.

There is a wonderful restfulness for worried hearts in this single assurance: "Lo, I am with you alway." This may be called Christ's richest and sweetest promise.

As the infant drops over on mother's bosom into soft repose, so Faith rests its weary head on Jesus.

But this truth flashes out through the clouds – *the Lord reigns*.

Not one of us has any trouble in accepting this doctrine of God's sovereignty as long as things go to our liking. We are perfectly satisfied to let God have His way as long as He does not cross us.

Any other cup we could have swallowed, but not this one.... In short, if God had only consulted us as to the medicine we should take, and as to the branch His pruning knife should lop off, we would have been perfectly submissive.

Our heavenly Father never afflicts one of His children but for a wise purpose.

There is such a wretched amount of self-will and pride and covetousness and unbelief even in undoubted Christians, that they require the fining-pot very often.

If His sharp knife prunes me, then I am only the more sure that He loves me.

Never, never have I been able to gain one ray of genuine consolation until I have lifted my eyes unto the hills from whence comes the almighty help.

What you need is to lift your eyes above your sinful, needy self, above your church-goings and other religious observances, above everyone and everything, to the only mountain whence comes your help. That mountain is Calvary. The crucified and now-living Son of God is the Object on which you must fix your eye. As a living man, you need a living Christ.

In nothing are we all apt to make more terrible blunders than in looking at God's providential dealings.

God loves to load the wings of private prayer with the sweetest, choicest, and chiefest blessings.

Thomas Brooks

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
APRIL 2009

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

CHRIST WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET

These closing chapters of John's Gospel have been described as "the holy of holies." There are some very sacred things. And it is all introduced by that wonderful word: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13. 1).

But now an amazing scene unfolds – the incarnate Son of God, conscious of the dignity of His Person ("knowing that He was come from God, and went to God"), is laying aside His garments – taking a towel – washing His disciples' feet. All we can say is, "O what matchless condescension!"

It seems that all proceeded in silence, till Jesus reached Simon Peter. And then Peter spoke. "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" We can understand Peter. He felt so unworthy and could not bear to think of his Lord and Master washing his feet. As yet Peter did not understand the mysterious significance of what the Lord was doing. "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." And what a word that has been down the years to the Lord's people in their trials and afflictions!

"Hereafter He will make us know,
And we shall surely find
He was too wise to err, and O
Too good to be unkind."

But then Peter persisted, and in this he was wrong: "Thou shalt never wash my feet." So now the Lord began to unfold something of the meaning of His mysterious action: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." And Peter could not bear that – "no part with the Saviour." "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

"Plunge me in that crimson ocean,
Thy atonement made for sin."

But Peter had still not quite understood things aright. What was the Lord teaching? "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." In other words, if a person has a bath, in walking home his feet can be defiled – but he does not need to return and bathe again. His feet need washing. The Lord's people, as they journey

through this wilderness, find that constantly their feet are defiled. They need fresh forgiveness for fresh-contracted guilt.

“Daily I’d repent of sin,
Daily wash in Calvary’s blood.”

But they have not lost their standing in Christ; they do not have to begin all over again. The new birth, “the washing of regeneration,” can never be repeated.

Sadly, some when they contract fresh guilt seem unconcerned. They rely on, “Once in Him, in Him for ever.” But others, harassed by Satan, go to an opposite extreme, and fear they are lost. Have they never really begun? “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet,” said the Saviour.

Then the Lord returned to the table. “After He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?” He proceeded to give His own application: “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”

So the feet-washing is “an example.” How are the Lord’s people to follow the example of their Lord and Master?

Some believe the “feet-washing” was established by the Lord Jesus as a third ordinance, along with baptism and the Lord’s Supper. There are churches that practise this. But we cannot find any justification in the Word of God for this to be just an outward ordinance. The Lord had a deeper meaning than this.

How then are we to wash one another’s feet?

1. If the Lord stooped so low, we should be willing to do the meanest thing, if called to do it, for the help and comfort of the Lord’s needy people.

2. We should pray one for another, wash one another’s feet in prayer. If we hear of one of God’s people who has acted wrongly, or fallen into sin, we should seek to pray for them. How often it is otherwise! “Have you heard what So-and-so has done?”

3. We should be willing lovingly to reprove. This is washing the disciples’ feet, and it is a ministry sorely lacking in the church of God today. Many say, “It is not my business.” Others delight to repeat what has taken place. Yet others go and do speak, but in a critical, harsh way. What grace is needed lovingly to go to a brother or sister and tell them where they have sinned! But (as Krummacher so beautifully speaks), “Never forget afterwards to wipe their feet with a towel as the Saviour did!”

CHRIST BEARING HIS PEOPLE'S SINS

*Sermon preached by J.K. Popham at Galeed, Brighton,
on April 24th, 1910*

Text: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2. 24).

This most glorious doctrine of the atonement the apostle utters almost in the same breath in which he has set forth Christ as an example to suffering believers. They were not to be surprised that they suffered; they were not to be restive, and proud, and unsubmissive in and under their sufferings; and the reason for their submission to, their patient endurance of, suffering, to which they are exhorted, is that Christ has left them "an example," that they should follow His steps; that He should be to them that great One who, though just, suffered for the unjust, and in that He was patient; "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not," but committed His persecutors as well as Himself unto God that judgeth righteously.

It were well for us in any case of suffering to have set before us from time to time, by the Spirit, so illustrious, so beautiful, so wonderful an example as here. Suffering Christians, look not at second causes. One says, "Look not at the stone that is flung at you, but at the hand which throws it." That hand is God's; that is, there is nothing done without Him. Job had no eye to the second causes for a time, in all his great sorrows; the One he saw was God: "The Lord gave" – that most men in the enjoyment of their possessions will readily own; but you, if you suffer loss, will need Job's faith to say with him, "and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

And having set before them this great example of patient suffering, the apostle then goes on to enunciate the greatest doctrine that the Scripture reveals; namely, that God in our nature, Jesus Christ, suffered for our sins: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" – the tree here being an outward sign of His inward, intense sufferings, sufferings beyond our conception as to their intensity and awfulness, and the terrible nature of them. For they were not merely what men inflicted, but above and beyond all that men inflicted, they were the sufferings set out by the prophet Isaiah when he says, "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." Also by the prophet Zechariah, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd."

The Holy Spirit in this verse, then, sets before us first of all the *Person of Christ*; secondly, *what He did*: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree"; and thirdly, *the end He had in view*,

what He accomplished, and what is the result; namely, “that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes” – the stripes which His Father inflicted on Him – “ye were healed.”

I. We have, first, *the Person of Christ*, a real Man, very God, yet one Person. A real Man born miraculously of the virgin; almighty God sighing human breath! Sent forth by the Father, He having become in the covenant His Father’s Servant: “Behold My Servant.” The Father “in the fulness of time” sent Him forth, “made of a woman, made under the law.” And mind, it is of vital importance to notice this, that He was “made under the law,” else His Father could not have justly inflicted upon Him the curse of the law. But He was made under it, subject to it; and God the Father laid with His own hand on His beloved Son in our nature all the sins of all the election of grace – a load intolerable to any other shoulder, and the curse due to all those sins – a death, indeed, that only Immanuel could endure.

We may believe many doctrines, but this of the Person of Christ, dear friends, is the first in importance. That believer whose faith is again and again drawn to, and gazes on the Person of Christ has somewhat of the hymn wrought in him:

“We first after Jesus reach,
And richly grasp the whole.”

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” In the fulness of time He sent Him forth; He was “manifested to take away our sins.” Whoso confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, is born of God. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” And what is that? Why, to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. See if your faith more regards Him than many other things. See if you are more anxious to find whether you know Him than whether you have some comfortable feelings. Comfortable feelings are most beautiful and pleasant if they are rightly founded. See if you are more anxious to know the Person of Christ than anything else. If you can first reach after Him, you will find in Him everything that the soul can need in this life; namely, pardon of sins, justification, sanctification, strength, perseverance, wisdom and all good things; and hereafter, bliss.

It must be right to be after this most of all; for it has “pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” All the fulness of humanity in its pure state dwells in this blessed One; all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in this blessed One. Look at this, dear friends; and may the Lord grant, whatever you are ignorant of, you may not be ignorant of this Person. You need His humanity – no salvation apart from that; you need His eternal Deity – no salvation without that. The humanity is needed because we are men; who but a man could atone for men? What nature

could take the curse due to men but the same as their own? So Christ is a real Man; as we are men, so *is* He; not only *was* He. He has been a Man ever since that wondrous day when His coming was gloriously announced, though His birth was so mean – announced by a multitude of the heavenly host, singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” He only could be a Substitute for men who is a man. Were it possible that an angel could bear suffering in the place of another, it could only be for another angel. Therefore whatever you do, you who are concerned, may this be set on your hearts by the Holy Ghost, to seek to know this very Man, the very Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. *What He did.* Here we have Him before us in a particular regard: “Who His own self *bare our sins* in His own body on the tree.” Why did He bear them? First, because He loved the people. “Yea, He *loved* the people.” The greatest act of love that a man can show to another is to lay down his life for him. So says Christ, who makes no mis-statements, no mistakes: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15. 13). What heart can conceive that flame of love that was in the almighty God, the second Person in the Trinity, the Son of God, who covenanted to become a Man, that He might die for the men given to Him by His Father before the world began? “Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me.” Such was His love for them that although He knew it would cost Him a life of obedience, of death – death not so much by the hands of man as by His Father’s own sword – yet He withheld not, but said, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God.” It was a self-emptying love that our Lord Jesus had for His people: He “made Himself,” as Paul says to the Philippians, “of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant.”

O we love the brightness of the sun, but there is a shining glory in the love of Christ which, as it falls on the eye of faith, is brighter, inconceivably, infinitely brighter, attracts more, affects more deeply, and does more wonders, than ever the created sun, that so delights and refreshes us, can do. Men weep when they find this in their hearts, they wonder when they feel it, they dissolve under its power, they are delivered from sin by it, they love holiness under its influence, they follow God as it draws them, they are *drawn* with “the bands of love,” the love of Christ. We sing sometimes (would that we could all honestly say it):

“O love divine, how sweet thou art!
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by thee?”

You know, some of you, if you spoke the truth, you would not dare to say that before God tonight.

What did He do? Bare our sins. Why? Because He loved us. Why did He do it? Because He would have those whom He loved with Himself. But how *could* they be with Him? They are not fit; in their birth they are sinners; in their lives they are sinners; they are not fit. No, but He said, "Therefore I will take all their unfitness away; it shall be no more theirs but Mine; I will take it on Me." And His Father said, "I will lay it on Thee," and He took it; as you read in the Corinthians of the Father and the Son: "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." The imputation of sin to Christ is the most mysterious act of God. And therefore, one may say, the awakening of the sword of divine justice against Christ is not only mysterious, but it is most glorious.

Now you cannot properly, scripturally imagine that mercy in all its tenderness, and at the same time truth, pure, naked, eternal truth, should come to a sinner and bless a sinner without the intervention of the Mediator, or that a sinner should find not only peace, but righteousness, without any satisfaction made to the law. This you cannot scripturally show, imagine or understand. But there is a Man in whom all these meet gloriously: "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven" (Psa. 85. 10, 11). O wondrous meeting-place, wondrous meeting! God's truth not threatening, God's mercy for sinners, who deserve the truth of the threatening, revealed to sinners – these two meeting in the Man Christ Jesus! Righteousness that must exact of the debtor the utmost farthing, and peace that never can smile on a rebel, these meeting in the Man Christ Jesus!

Perhaps one says, "But what is that to me?" Well, sinner, it is this to thee, if thou art going to heaven, that through meeting in Christ they can meet in thy soul, can meet in thy conscience, can make thee a blessed creature, fit for God's presence. I wish we all longed for God's presence. It would argue that we knew something of Him, and that, too, in that Man Christ Jesus in whom His presence can be enjoyed in absolute consistency with holiness and righteousness.

"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." That is why He did it, that sinners and God should come together; that mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, should meet together, and embrace each other, first in Him and then in them; that is, in their experience.

Look at what He did. He

"Bore all incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare."

Almighty God sighing! almighty God, a poor, broken-hearted Man, whom no man pitied, who looked for some to take pity, and found none; whose fury therefore upheld Him (Psa. 69. 20; Isa. 63. 5). He went through the great business. What was exacted of Him He rendered full payment of; what was due to sin He received into His heart and bosom – the execution of divine justice, the wrath and curse of the broken law. And this because the Father put sin upon Him, had in a mysterious way “*made* Him to be sin for us.” He *did* none. No guile was found in His mouth because there was none in His heart, none in His human nature, which was perfect.

Yet God the Father dealt with Him as if He were a sinner, as if He had done the things upon which God’s vengeance was poured, as if He had contracted the debts of unfulfilled commandments – dealt with Him as a sinner, and would have Him also work out a righteousness as if He needed it for His *own* justification. Let this be the search of thy life, O sinner: did Jesus bear *thy* sins? Better this than be searching the stars, and making investigations in the bowels of the earth, useful as that may be among men; better this than all other things, to search if the Lord will show thee the marvellous sight of His only-begotten Son bowed beneath the load of *thy* sins.

“His own self” – unassisted. Angels were not there to assist Him in this tremendous work, or minister to Him when He was faint. Angels ministered to Him in the wilderness and in Gethsemane, but He bore the load alone, and of the people there was none with Him. He trod the winepress alone. What became of sin when Christ died? We read He made an end of it, “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” This for our instruction is set out in type under the old dispensation (Lev. 16). Two goats were selected, one for the Lord for a sin-offering, and the other for the scapegoat. The scapegoat had the sins of the people confessed over his head, and then by a fit man was led into the wilderness, into a land not inhabited, not to be brought back. And it is written of the sins of the Lord’s Israel that they are “cast into the depths of the sea”; no one is able to bring them back in point of condemnation before God. That is to say, justice, infinite justice, is satisfied; law, exacting law, is amply satisfied; holiness, inflexible, is satisfied; fallen men, sinners, are rendered fit to be the guests of God.

That is what Jesus did with sin. And if the Holy Ghost causes you to believe and receive it, O sin-afflicted sinner, it will make heaven on earth, even in your heart. It will be such a heaven as no earthly misery can destroy for the time. It will make such peace in your conscience as no accusing devil for the time can disturb. Such is this great work of Christ. Sin is removed; it is made an end of.

Then it is declared that He brought in “everlasting righteousness” (Dan. 9. 24). We had a righteousness in creation which was not everlasting. In our natural head, Adam, we were put in the garden as free to stand and free to fall. Human freedom God gave us, and we sold it for the forbidden fruit. We shall never get it back, except we get it in Jesus Christ, where it is immutable. All your talk about human freedom is nothing but a figment, a deception of your heart. You sold your freedom, gave it up; sold your birthright, and despised God’s goodness in it; and you will never get it back, I tell you, unless you get it back in Jesus Christ and in another fashion, by a divine gift of sovereign grace. Never! But when Christ takes away a man’s sin, He takes away all that legally binds him; and now the day is come when (to go back to another type, Lev. 14. 7) the poor creature, hitherto bound, shall have his pinions touched with blood, and be loosed, and shall fly free in the air, fly to his God by faith, and at last fly to heaven freed from the trammels of his sins, and all those evils which are in his members to affect and afflict him as long as he is here.

This brings me to:

III. *The end Christ had in view* when He bore our sins, suffered for our sins; namely, “That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness.” Why, brethren, the death of Christ was vicarious; it was for others, and it was so for others that they should live, *they must live*. O grace, how great, how effectual! O grace, how thou didst bury all the sin of the church! When Jesus Christ on Calvary’s accursed tree said, “It is finished,” heaven was pleased, Jesus was blest, no more under the curse; angels looked on, the Father was satisfied, the Spirit was satisfied, justice satisfied, holiness satisfied, mercy had free vent, love had made an opening through which she could flow as through a channel, a mighty river, into the hearts of sinners, making them live as it touched them (Ezek. 47. 9). It is wonderful what this death of Jesus accomplished. Men live who see Him die; they are happy that see Him dying for them. This river is a “river of water of life,” and is known to be that. Wilderness though you may feel to be, arid desert, deathly in your own gravelike, deathlike heart, this pure “river of water of life” will conquer your death. Ah, it was this death of Christ that opened the way to heaven for poor sinners. How wonderful!

Think of that closed up Garden of Eden, kept now by a flaming sword turning every way. No way back by that! As if the Lord said, “You have broken My law; I cannot think of permitting you to try to mend it.” That is not the way to please God. You may object, “That should not be said”; but why should it not? Why should I not say it? Say you, “Is it not right that a man should endeavour to keep the law?” It depends upon *why* he tries to keep it. Suppose he should try to keep

it in order to obtain eternal life. I say, if there be such a person here, that is the greatest act of rebellion you can ever be guilty of. Your best deeds with such a view are but high rebellion against the blessed God, whose glorious gospel declares that there is but one gate and way of eternal life. "As Thou," Christ says to His Father in John's gospel, "as Thou hast given Him" (the Son of Man) "power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him."

What, then, is the greatest act of obedience that a sinner can ever be enabled to, which shall most not only benefit him, but glorify God? This, to "believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6. 29). The greatest stumblingblock our proud, haughty nature can have is that truth. No wonder one who was rich should go away offended. No wonder others should say, because His teaching was so contrary to nature, that He had a devil and was mad; for He went close to them, and quite crossed their best convictions, their highest ambitions, and all legal efforts, and said they were all nothing but rebellion against God.

The only way to life is this, that Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Would that God would thoroughly gospel us by revealing this in our hearts with power! It would take away (as to the dominion of it) that legal spirit that so barrenises us by setting us to work in order to obtain blessings in a way that God has not ordained to bestow them. He, "His own self bare our sins," paid our debts, received into His heart the penalty due to us, "in His own body on the tree."

Fix not your gaze on the tree, that literal tree, or on that transaction which was opened to the eyes of all within the place. Fix not your gaze there, and think not that any natural sympathy that may be excited in your minds by some recital of the crucifixion is of a spiritual kind. I can understand how people may almost hear the thud of that accursed tree, as it was dropped into the hole made for it. One can imagine the awful, the exquisite agony of that sacred body that was stretched upon it. One can understand a sensitive nature weeping at the thought of an innocent and just Man being thus treated, and one can imagine that a person may weep thus who is at the same time dead in trespasses and sins. But may the Lord carry us through this external part, to see that awful pain of His soul, to perceive what His holy nature must have felt when it had sin lying on it, when the iniquities of His people met on Him; for so the word is in Isaiah (53. 6, margin), the Lord causing them "to meet on Him." May we see by faith how He sank, and what He felt when He said, "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me"; when He said, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" If aught will make us weep with an evangelical repentance, make us weep bitter-sweet tears before the Lord, it is the sight by faith of what Jesus Christ suffered in His soul for our sins.

Now let me again say, the greatest search you can ever be engaged in is to search whether this was for you. *Do not take it for granted.* The Spirit of God bears witness in the hearts of His people that the Son of God loved them and gave Himself for them; as says the apostle, He "loved me, and gave Himself for me." And the search of faith, the look of faith, faith's exercise, labour and longing attended by love in the heart of a believer, will be this way: "O tell me, make me know that *my* iniquities met on Thee; that all the blackness, and guilt, and death of *my* sin Thou hast borne; that Thou didst take into Thy holy soul the dreadful curse due to *me*; that when the Father called upon the sword of inflexible justice that was made bright to be bathed in Thy blood, that then *I* was upon Thy heart, that *my* sins were there." That is the greatest thing you can be after. The Lord cause you to be after it. Religion is very easy, but this labour is very hard, yet it is attended with the most beautiful and wonderful results; for the Lord sooner or later says, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." "Canst thou not be happy without Me? I am thine, I am thy God." Dost thou need pardon? "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." Art thou a Peter? The Lord will look and smile upon thee. Well, whatever a man is, if his heart be drawn this way, he will get all he wants; peace here, glory hereafter.

"That we, *being dead to sins.*" How are we dead to sins? Can you reckon yourselves to be dead to sins when they live in you, when often they seem to predominate, when some sins may, as you may feel, be paramount? Can you in these cases reckon yourselves to be dead to them? Yes, by faith; not otherwise. If you can say, "Now by His death I am freed; I am freed from the law; I am delivered from its curse; there is now no claim remaining on me; justice brings nothing against me," that is being dead to sins in the gospel sense first of all. And until faith receives assurance, there is no settled peace in the conscience. Put your foot, as it may seem to you, one day on the neck of some of your sins, keep your foot there for a few hours, and if you build a hope of heaven on that, you will find very likely that those very sins have, ere you were aware, wriggled from under your foot, serpent-like, and are round your neck threatening your life. He who builds a hope of heaven on anything short of the death of Christ will find that his hope, even if it has some things of a right nature, has got some things about it, and has acted in some way, that will not be honoured of God.

But then there is a being dead to sins *experimentally*, pleasantly, and very sweetly, as when one can say, "Now I am crucified to the world by the cross of Christ, and by it the world is crucified to me," when he can really say,

"Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me;

Once I admired its trifles too,
But grace has set me free!"

Hence the apostle says, "Our conversation" – not our lip talk, but our whole life and course – "is in heaven." Why is it there? Because our Friend, our Redeemer is there. Our God, our Lord, the Object of our faith, He whom we worship, He on whom love fixes itself, about whom faith entwines itself, into whom hope casts an anchor, *He* is there. Hence people can say today, sometimes, what David said in his day and of himself: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

"That we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." It is as if He should say, and indeed He did say it to the Romans, that we should live unto God. To live unto God is to have Him for our great end. There are many ends that men have, but there is one ultimate end that God gives His saints. It is proper we should have various ends. Nothing is more proper than that the husband's end should be the happiness and well-being of his wife and family; and the wife's end, the comfort of her husband. Nothing is more proper for a child (and do listen to me, children) than that he should honour and obey his parents. These ends, and others, we ought to have; the Scripture enjoins them. It is a shame for a professor to talk of religion without having these in some measure before him. But there is an end beyond them all, a blessed end. God is that end, that we should live unto Him. You can live unto God when you are eating your bread, if you have grace; you are taught to do it: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.... Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (1 Cor. 10. 31; Rom. 14. 7, 8). If we *half* believed it, we should often be different persons from what we are, as to our conduct.

"By whose stripes ye were healed." Have you been sore? Are you sore? Did you ever know that scripture, "My sore ran in the night, and ceased not"; or that scripture, "O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed"? Why? "I have sinned." When did you sin? "When did I *not* sin?" you may say. When did you sin? When you thought that foolish thought, when you uttered that idle word, cast that unlawful look. When did you sin? When you knelt down, and your eyes were about your house or planting your garden or in your business, then you sinned. When you did lawful things, but did them improperly.

What then? If you say, "I have sinned," the Lord looks for such as you; He looks for people who confess their sins, they are so few – few in this chapel perhaps. They are so scarce and rare in these days. "If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me

not," then He will say, "Deliver him ... I have found a ransom." So may the Lord heal us. "By whose stripes," sufferings, sorrow, grief, shame, death, "by whose stripes ye were healed."

And how are we healed? O, when the blood is on your conscience, you have not a sore left, not a sore. What about the idle words, the evil thought, the unlawful look? The guilt is gone. How sweet this is! What follows? "I am sorry," the sinner says; "I am more sorry now I am forgiven than I ever was before." Everyone knows that who knows what pardon is. Everyone who knows what pardon is can say he loves this repentance.

"By whose stripes ye were healed." Now may the Lord heal you who are sore and sick by these wondrous stripes of Jesus Christ; and should He do it, then you would say, "Now, Lord, if shame is on my name, if persecution is my lot, if trouble comes to me in my circumstances, do grant I may follow Thy steps, who hast set me an example of patient suffering." Amen.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO ONE SPEAKING BEFORE THE CHURCH

My dear E.,

I have only time to say we are hoping to see you tomorrow evening. Doubtless you are much exercised about the matter. Try to remember that neither strength nor fulness in yourself are needed. All fulness is put into that Lord Jesus who has appeared to you. His good Spirit alone can give freshness, life and reality to His own work in you. So really, your poverty will make a good case. Do not expect strength to remove all sense of weakness; it is given in weakness, and makes the sense of it very keen, but not bitter.

Remember you are to try to speak of God's goodness to you and in you, to very poor people, some of whom because they have been longer in the way, and have a little more experience than you, are weaker than you. They can, therefore, feel for you. I hope we shall pray for you. Aim at casting yourself unreservedly on the Lord's rich mercy. You have not to commend yourself. Thank the Lord for so graciously opening your mouth last Wednesday, and trust Him to renew His favour tomorrow.

With love in the truth and much sympathy,

Yours very truly,

J.K.Popham

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

By Ambrose Serle (1742-1812)

“Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger.” No, my Jesus, never was sorrow like Thine. Thou barest the griefs of millions, griefs which would have sunk those millions into insufferable woe. Omnipotence itself groaned under the tremendous load which forced from Thy pure and perfect body, not common sweat (the curse inflicted with human labour), but a dreadful sweat, bursting forth in great drops of agonising blood. O what a doleful cry didst Thou utter, and who but Thyself can conceive those (to us unknown) pangs and sufferings, which forced from Thy sacred lips, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

The meditation of Thy sufferings and death is painful in the sympathy of nature; yet I cannot wish that Thou hadst not endured them, nor didst Thou fully wish it for Thyself. Thou wast contented to be betrayed into the hands of sinful men for this very purpose. It was by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God that all the parts of this solemn event were transacted. And it is for the everlasting interest of me and of thousands, that all the scriptures concerning Thee were thus awfully fulfilled.

Lord, what is sin, that Thou Thyself couldst not be spared, when from the souls of Thy people it was taken off and laid upon Thee? Can anything more solemnly describe the hatred of the divine nature to sin, and the severity of the divine justice upon account of it, than the pangs, the horrors, the cries of Thee, my Jesus, Thou suffering Son of God? And if Thou wert sacrificed for sin, who in Thyself knewest no sin, what shall become of those who reject Thy saving sacrifice, and yet all the while have nothing but sin in themselves?

Who could support such excruciating tortures, unassisted and uncomforted as Thou wert, even upon a just account? It was not in the power of a creature to sustain Thine inward griefs, Thine outward torments, and the entire dereliction or forsaking of God, of men and of nature, all together and at once, as Thou didst sustain them, upon any account or motive in the world. But Thou enduredst the whole with dignified complacency and satisfaction, even for Thine enemies, to convert them into friends, and to make rebels and apostates heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Thyself of an eternal weight of glory. May not I turn Thine own words and say, “Behold, and see, was there ever love like Thy love, which Thou showedst for Thy people, when the Lord afflicted Thee in the day of His fierce anger?”

Lord, how shall I speak, and what shall I say to these things? Shall my incredulous heart be still backward to believe? If Jesus died for my

sins, can I die for them too? If He freely bare the curse for my sake, will the justice of my God still require the curse at my hands? If my iniquities were taken on Himself by my Saviour, and He made a full and perfect atonement for them, can I dare to affront the divine majesty by supposing that He is yet so unrighteous as to charge them all again upon me? O forgive my hard and impenitent heart that I should ever imagine such blasphemy against Thy faithfulness and love; that I should even think that Thou canst be so unjust and untrue, even in contradiction to Thine own Word, as to lay that still upon myself, which for Thy sake was entirely laid upon my dearest and most blessed Redeemer!

Lord, I melt into tears of shame at myself, and into tears of comfort, upon the remembrance of all this Thy kindness to my soul. Thy blood, O my Jesus, cleanseth from all sin; and if from all, what sin can possibly remain to be now imputed to me? O help, Thou Mighty God, Thou Prince of peace, that I may no more be faithless, but believing.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

By Dr. Robert Hawker (1753-1827)

“The Lord is risen indeed” (Luke 24. 34.)

Let thy meditations, my soul, this morning be sweetly exercised upon thy risen and exalted Saviour. For if thy Lord be indeed risen, then will it undeniably follow that as He died for our sins, so He arose for our justification, and is thereby become the firstfruits of them that sleep. Beg of God the Holy Ghost to lead thee into the devout contemplation and enjoyment of this soul-reviving subject.

Trace the testimonies of this wonderful event until, from being overpowered in the vast assemblage of witnesses, thou art prompted to cry out in the same language, “The Lord is risen indeed.” And surely never was there any one fact so fully, so clearly, and so circumstantially confirmed. It hath the united testimony of heaven and earth; of angels and men; of the living and the dead; of friends and foes; and God Himself confirming it in the midst of His people by sending down the Holy Ghost, agreeably to the promise of Jesus at the Day of Pentecost.

Review these things in order. First, heaven gave in its evidence in those supernatural signs which issued in the morning of Jesus’ resurrection; for we are told that an angel descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door of Jesus’ sepulchre, and sat upon it. And secondly, earth gave her testimony also to the same by the convulsions sustained at His approach – there was a great earthquake. And then again, as angels came to inform the pious women who waited

to embalm the sacred body of Christ that Jesus was risen, so the testimony of multitudes among men gave equal attestation to this glorious truth. For beside the many separate and distinct appearances Jesus made to numbers, He appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, by way of confirming the undoubted fact.

The living, who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead, surely could not be mistaken. And the dead, which arose from their graves as if to celebrate the glories of His resurrection in which they took part, came forth when the sepulchres yawned at the triumph of Jesus, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many. And not only the friends of Jesus, but the foes of Jesus became undesignedly the witnesses of this great truth; for, by attributing His resurrection to the disciples' stealing away His body, they positively prove that the body of Christ remained not in the sepulchre. And that the poor, timid disciples, whose meetings were all in secret for fear of the Jews, should project such a scheme as to take away the body, which the Roman soldiers were purposely placed to secure, is not to be equalled in folly in the very idea, unless by that other part of the childish story, that the body was stolen while the guard slept. And so the testimony, it should seem, to this tale is the testimony of men sleeping!

Here then, my soul, in devout contemplation, take thy stand at the door of the sepulchre of thy Jesus, and ponder over such a multitude of witnesses who all cry out with one voice, as the angels did to the astonished women, "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

And O Thou dear Redeemer, do Thou, while my soul is pondering these things, do Thou draw nigh, as Thou didst to the disciples on the morning of thy resurrection, and sweetly commune with me of all these blessed truths concerning Thyself. Lead me by faith through all the precious subjects, from the sepulchre to Thine house of prayer, to the ordinance and Thy table, from Thy cross to Thy crown; and cause my whole heart to burn within me while Thou art talking to me by the way, and while Thou art opening to me the Scriptures. Then shall I truly rejoice that my Lord is indeed risen from the dead, and my soul is risen with Him, from dead works, to serve Thee the living and true God.

"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4. 25).

My soul, thou must not yet dismiss, no, nor ever dismiss, the sweet and precious subject of thy Lord's resurrection. One part of it thou hast not yet scarce glanced at, and yet it is such an one as thine everlasting safety and thy justification before God depend upon. For, as the Holy Ghost hath said by the mouth of His servant the apostle, if Christ be not

risen, then are believers yet in their sins (1 Cor. 15. 17). See to it then, my soul, that what this sweet scripture saith be true, that Jesus was delivered for thine offences and was raised again for thy justification.

While Jesus was on the cross, the payment and the ransom for sin was then discharged. Jesus was then truly delivered for our offences. And when He arose from the dead, then the poor sinner, for whom He was delivered, and for whom He died, was truly justified before God; for thereby proof was made that the debt was paid, the receipt given, and God in confirmation of it styled Himself by a new name, even the God of peace, in bringing again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ as the great Shepherd of His sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

Hence the resurrection of Jesus was like going into the presence of God to cancel the bond, the handwriting of ordinances that was against us. It was as if Jesus gave this testimony in His glorious resurrection, that both sin and death had now lost their retaining power; the dominion of both were for ever done away, and all true believers in Christ might join the apostle's song, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? 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."

My soul, be sure to keep this in constant view when, at any time, thou art meditating on the death and resurrection of Jesus, and let both be thy daily meditation. Think how truly blessed, how truly happy, how present and everlastingly secure must those souls be who are interested in the death and in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. By the one He hath procured their pardon, and by the other He hath justified their persons; so that when law and justice present their charge against them, this is the unanswerable plea: Jesus was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.

O dearest Lord, grant me daily and hourly to be bringing into all my spiritual enjoyments the sweet sense and consciousness of being thus interested, justified and secured. Give me a present right and title, that I may live upon it; and by and by, when Thou shalt call me home, then, O Lord, present me finally and fully, once for all, as made comely in Thy comeliness, clothed in Thy righteousness, and fully prepared both in soul and body for everlasting happiness and glory among them that are sanctified.

"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15. 20).

One view more, my soul, while thou art meditating upon this delightful subject of thy Redeemer's triumph over death and the grave,

and now look at Jesus' resurrection as a sure pledge and confirmation of thine own. Did Jesus' holy body arise? Then so shall thine, sinful and polluted as it now is, but then made a glorified body by virtue of thy union with Him. For so saith the Holy Ghost by His servant the apostle: He "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." For, "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Phil. 3. 21; Rom. 8. 11).

Pause then, my soul, and rejoice in this glorious and transporting doctrine. As sure as Jesus arose, so surely shall all His people, for Jesus arose as the firstfruits. Jesus arose not as a private person, but as the public Head. Never call to mind the resurrection of Jesus, but be sure to connect always with it this blessed view of the subject: every redeemed believer is part of Christ's body. And as we are by nature part of the first Adam and die, from our union and connection and being of the same nature with him, so by grace being part of Christ's mystical body, who is called in Scripture particularly on this account the second Adam, His people are interested in all that concerns Him, and because He liveth, they must live also. Hence He is called the firstfruits, the Firstborn from the dead. And as all the after fruits of the harvest follow the firstfruits, so the saints, born again in God, follow the Firstborn from the dead to glory.

O heart-reviving subject! The eyes that now read these lines, and the hand that now writes them, if a part of Christ's mystical body by regeneration, must assuredly be a part in resurrection. In the eye of the law they are one. Jesus is the Head of His body the church; and how incomplete in glory would be that glorious Head without the whole and every individual member of His fair one, His spouse, which He hath betrothed to Himself for ever! Shout then, my soul, and shout aloud, and say with Job, "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." My flesh shall moulder indeed in the dust and see corruption. And so would I have it to be. Vile and polluted as it now is, and fighting as it now doth against my soul's desires and affections, methinks I would not, if it were possible, take it with me to heaven as it now is. But when Jesus shall change this vile body, and have fashioned it like unto His glorious body, then it will be without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; and then soul and body, united together in love and both united to the Lord, will form one united object to praise and glorify God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to all eternity!

My soul, dwell upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; and as thou believest that Jesus died and rose again, so equally believe also that all they that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this the

apostle had in commission from the Lord to tell all true believers, that when Jesus shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God, the dead in Christ shall arise; and then they which remain unto the coming of the Lord shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they ever be with the Lord. O for grace to comfort one another with these words!

EARLY TRIALS

By Dr. John Owen (1616-1683)

This enlightening (Heb. 10. 32) was that work of God's grace mentioned in 1 Peter 2. 9, their translation "out of darkness into His marvellous light." They were naturally blind, as are all men, and peculiarly blinded with prejudices against the truth of the gospel. Therefore when God by His effectual call delivered them out of that state of darkness by the renovation of their understandings and the removal of the prejudices, the light of the knowledge of God shining into their hearts is this illumination – the saving, sanctifying light which they received at their first effectual call and conversion to God. This spiritual change was presently followed with days of affliction, trouble and persecution. In itself it is, for the most part, accompanied with joy, delight, zeal and vigorous actings of faith and love (1 Pet. 1. 8). For,

1. God did usually grant unto believers some secret pledge and sealing of His Spirit, which filled them with joy and zeal (Eph. 1. 13).

2. Their own hearts are exceedingly affected with the excellency, glory and beauty of the things revealed unto them, of what they now see perfectly, whereunto they were before in darkness; that is, the love and grace of Christ Jesus in the revelation of Himself unto them.

3. All graces are new and fresh, not yet burdened, clogged, or wearied by temptations, but are active in their several places. Hence frequent mention is made of and commendation given unto the "first love" of persons and churches.

This was the state and condition of those Hebrews when the days of trial and affliction came upon them; it was immediately after their first conversion unto God. And it is usual with God thus to deal with His people in all ages. He no sooner calls persons to Himself, but He leads them into the wilderness. He no sooner plants them, but He shakes them with storms, that they may be more firmly rooted. He doth it,

1. Utterly to take off their expectations from this world or anything therein. They shall find that they are so far from bettering their outward estate in this world by cleaving unto Christ and the church, as that the whole rage of it will be stirred up against them upon that account, and all

the things enjoyed in it be exposed unto ruin. This the Lord Christ everywhere warned His disciples of, affirming that those who are not willing to renounce the world, and to take up the cross, do not belong unto Him.

2. For the trial of their faith (1 Pet. 1. 6, 7).
3. For the glory and propagation of the gospel.
4. For the exercise of all graces.
5. To breed us up into the military discipline of Christ, as He is the Captain of our salvation. They who pass through their first trials are Christ's veterans on new attempts.

IGNORING MEN'S OPINION

By Dr. John Owen

1. Take heed of so much softness and tenderness of nature that may give too deep a sense of reproach, scorn and shame, which may give too deep an entrance unto these things into your minds, being such as will weaken them in their duties. This ordinarily is a frame and disposition of mind that lies at the next door to virtue, to modesty, to humility and the like; but in this case it lies at the next door to diffidence, despondency and carnal fear. We are in this case to harden our countenances, and to set our faces as a flint and adamant, so as to despise all reproaches and scorns on the account of our profession.

2. It is required that we do not put too much value on our names and reputations in the world. "A good name is better than precious ointment," it yields a good savour; but it is so only with these two limitations:

i. That it be obtained by things that are really good and praiseworthy, for some have made their names famous and acceptable to the multitude by ways and actions that have really nothing praiseworthy in them. And,

ii. That they be good men who esteem their name to be good. To have a good report amongst an evil multitude is of no advantage. Yet are some men very tender herein: they would be praised and spoken well of by the many; at least they would not be spoken evilly or contemptuously of. But if we have not an under-valuation of our names and reputations universally, in respect unto Christ and the gospel, if we are not contented to be made "as the filth and offscouring of all things," it will greatly disadvantage us in the time of sufferings. And therefore in the providence of God, frequently it falls out that if there be anything that is unto us as the apple of our eye, of all we should be tender of our names and reputations in, this shall be peculiarly attempted [assailed?] and reproached.

UPHELD IN TIMES OF AFFLICTION

A few jottings of trials and deliverances extracted from an account written by Mrs. Ethel Field (1913-1997). Mrs. Field was a church member at Coventry, and later at Attleborough. Her daughter is the wife of Mr. Gilbert Hyde, pastor at Tenterden.

When I was about twenty-three, a young man who worked at the same place as I became very friendly. We came much into contact with one another, as I was over the training department of the drawing office and he was over all the electric workers connected with the aeroplanes. He asked me to go out with him several times, but I refused as I felt he was a bit old for me (he was eleven years older and at twenty-three that seems a lot). I also wondered about chapel. Anyway, after a time I went out with him. He used to attend a Baptist chapel but he decided he would come to some services with me. I must say I felt very concerned at times and felt I was being rushed along at such a pace it frightened me, but I cannot say it made me pray for direction.

But one Thursday evening, we had old Mr. James from the Cotswolds. His text was in the Song of Solomon. What it was I just do not know, but when we were walking home, my friend said (he mentioned the name of his minister, who was very well known in Coventry) that he quite agreed with his minister that the Song of Solomon should not be in the Bible. What came to the foremost then I cannot describe. I never thought I would stand up to anyone about the Bible like it and I could see it really shook this young man. I just cannot put my feelings into words. The next week I would not go out with him.

If anyone had asked me then if I was praying for direction, I would not have thought I was, but the groans, not knowing what to say – I have realised since, that there is more prayer in the heartfelt groans than a thousand words.

I agreed to give him my answer after the weekend. In some ways it was hard for the flesh as he had such a good position; I would have nothing to fear naturally, so I thought, but as I went to chapel on the Sabbath morning, I said, "If only the minister could say a direct word, that I would know what to do." It was Mr. Light and his text was Amos 3. 3: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" I really felt it was for me and I was enabled to part with my companion, although he was not able to understand it.

I must say my life was really taking a different pattern; the things I used to long for seemed to have lost their attraction.

Later she met Mr. Jim Field who had come up from Sussex to work in Coventry, and they were married in April 1945.

When Mary was three and David five, Jim was knocked off his bike on the way to work. He was so very, very ill with a fracture of the base of his skull; at one time he felt he was going to die. He told me afterwards he was enabled to give all up; he just felt he was not able to give me up, but the Lord came with those words, "I have gone to prepare a place for you." It was such a sweet time for him; he longed to leave this world. I said to him, "Whatever will happen to us?" And he told me the Lord had given him a promise as regards us, that our bread and water would be sure. (Up until this day I have proved that promise true, although sorely tried at times.)

Well, after another month I fetched my dear one out of hospital, but he was in such a sorry state. I had to dress him as his shoulder was out of place and his ear had to have heat treatment, so we had to visit hospital every day for quite a time. He found this so trying as he was so weak. But I will never forget that first night he was out of hospital; it seemed almost as if he preached a sermon in bed that night. The words he had were, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." I just lay and listened to him; I felt he was in heaven in his feelings and I was shut outside.

After about six months, my husband went back to work, but he could not go back to his normal job owing to the damage done to his head and he had a very disturbing noise from his ear which made things very uncomfortable. So he was put onto "progress," which he felt he would never master as his memory was so bad since his illness. But I believe the dear Lord so sweetly answered our feeble prayer and he managed to get on much better.

In two years we were blessed with another little boy. My dear one had not enjoyed much good health and the day that our youngest son was twelve months old we all had bad coughs; all of us got better, but Jim did not seem to be able to get rid of his and after Christmas, David kept running a temperature. One weekend it reached 104°F and greatly alarmed us. We kept having the doctor and in the end he called a specialist who decided to have David into hospital for tests (these showed him to have tuberculosis). He went in the day after his ninth birthday and came out the day before his tenth birthday. They then tested Mary and Andrew and realised that Andrew being so young must be in contact with somebody with T.B. so my husband and I were x-rayed and it was found that my dear one was in a very infectious state. Within three days he was in hospital right in the middle of the country. It used to take me two hours on the bus. I just could not describe my feelings. I felt the Lord had done it and I was dumb.

Andrew did not pick up and in the morning I had to take him to hospital for a check up. I was awakened early that morning with these

words: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." I said, "Lord, is it Andrew?" I must say here, that Mary was at school, and during the time she was away I just filled my time with Andrew. It was such a terrible miss, my dear one being taken away, as we loved one another so much. When we got to hospital and they looked at Andrew's x-ray, they told me they would have to have him in hospital. What a blow! But as I have proved, He is a jealous God and He will not have divided hearts.

How I lived through the following weeks I hardly knew. I had three hospitals to visit. Mary was very independent but it was so kind of Him to leave her with me.

Friends were so kind having her during the week when I had to do visiting, but she always went with me to visit David and Andrew on a Saturday; poor child, she was not allowed up into the wards with the boys (they were in separate wards), so she had to spend her two hours in the kitchen. We had some very cold journeys during the winter and although we had so little money to spend on things, we were so wonderfully provided for, and neither of us had any colds or illness.

During this time, on visiting my husband, everybody seemed to be having appointments with the doctor to see how their husbands were getting on, so I arranged for one. The doctor told me in what a bad way my husband was when admitted to hospital; he said they had started some treatment but he did not really hold much hope. In fact, he told me I would just nurse him till he died, and from the way he spoke, it did not sound as though that would be very long. It was such a blow. I do not know whether I spoke to the doctor or sat silent.

Outside the doctor's surgery there was a park and I walked round and round there like anyone out of their mind until I realised I had got to get on a bus to visit my husband. How to go I just did not know, but to my surprise he was bright and quite cheerful. He had been so down for quite some time. My back had been bad and he asked me if it still pained me as I had to mind how I sat down. I had to tell him it did. But he then continued, "I shall soon be out of here and back to work." I just looked at him; after what I had been told that day it seemed to take my breath away. So I asked him if he had had a word. He said no, but when he had been washing that morning he had such a sweet persuasion that the Lord would heal him and he would go back to work. I could not help but hope that his feeling awoke a hope in my heart that "with God all things are possible." On the bus coming home I believe I prayed all the way. I told the Lord if He would but heal him, I would go and tell His people what I believe He had done for my never-dying soul.

In the meantime, Andrew was taken into hospital; being only two years old it was impossible to explain to him why he was there, and so

he fretted dreadfully, so much so the friends at chapel believed that if I left him there he would die of a broken heart. I cannot explain my feelings when I had to leave him as he hung onto me and cried so. As I told a friend, the only reason I left him there was that promise I believe I had before I knew he had to go into hospital: "I will not leave you comfortless." How I had to plead with the dear Lord to give me a little of His comfort!

One Sabbath evening, I felt so down and my faith seemed at such a low ebb. As I took my Bible down from the shelf to read, the hymnbook fell down. When I picked it up, it was that verse of hymn 261:

"It is the Lord, enthroned in light,
Whose claims are all divine,
Who has an undisputed right
To govern me and mine."

I fell on my knees and told the Lord He had a perfect right to do what He willed with my little family, but to give me His special grace to fall under any load He saw fit to lay upon me. I arose somewhat comforted.

Well, I arranged to go and see him (Andrew) on the Monday with a dear friend, as several had been to see him on the Sabbath and said he was so distressed. We had to wait in the passageway before we could visit, and Andrew's bed had been moved, so we could see him without him seeing us, and there to our amazement he was jumping about in his cot and laughing, talking away to the other children. All I could say was, "I can leave him here, Lord."

From then for the whole thirteen months he was in hospital, I was able to leave him without much fuss; in fact when he moved to Bramcote, where David was, he seemed to cling to his sister more than to me, which in one way was a help, but it pulls at your heart strings.

I believe as I passed through this great trial, I proved on many occasions the truth of hymn 320: "God moves in a mysterious way."

There were so many wonderful ways we were provided for in providence. I will only mention one or two, not that I would belittle His great goodness to me and to us as a family.

One day I was due to visit my husband on the Thursday afternoon as my cheque for National Health always came on a Thursday morning. However, on this occasion it did not arrive. I was so upset, as there was not enough money in the house to pay the bus fare – it was about a two hour ride by bus around the country villages – so I used my last two pennies and went and rang the office. They apologised and said they would put it in the post to arrive the following morning (Friday). How to keep from weeping in the street I just did not know; it made me feel quite ill.

I said to my little girl when she got home for dinner that I would not be going to see Daddy; I would go and lie down as I felt poorly. Her words were, "O Mummy, Daddy will be so disappointed." I went upstairs trying to pray that the dear Lord would comfort my husband in his disappointment. For some reason, I opened a drawer in my dressing table and there amongst some letters from my mother, lay two half crowns. How they got there I do not know, as there was never any money to spare, but I believe it was an answer to my prayer.

I rushed downstairs; my head was better and I was soon away to catch the bus. It was the exact amount: 2/6 there, 2/6 back. I never thought of it till I got back that evening: I had never taken my husband anything; well I had no money to buy anything if I had thought of it. He usually said, "Have you brought me anything?" but he never said a word. I felt the Lord was in it. Instead, that day he was quite excited looking for me to come as he was allowed to go for a walk round the grounds. O how thankful I was that he was not disappointed! The Lord had provided the means for me to go.

Another time which stands out in my mind was when David needed new pyjamas. He used to kneel a lot in bed. The sister told me to patch them, but I still had my pride; I just could not bear to see David in hospital in patched pyjamas. Having taken some money out of what I had put by for my bills, I was just starting out and the postman came with a parcel. When I opened it, out fell two pairs of pyjamas. They were brand new. Those words came to me with such power and rebuke: "Before they call, I will answer: and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." I felt broken down as I had not made it a matter of prayer before I went out. It proved to me once more what a faithful God I had. The pyjamas had come from my husband's sister. She used to do cooking for this lady who had two sons at boarding school. She had ordered the wrong size pyjamas for one of her boys, so she asked Jim's sister whether they would do for me. They fitted David as if they had been made for him. For there are no mistakes with God; He knows just the right size.

I could recount so many times of His great goodness, and there is one thing I am certain of: "If you ever know a God of grace, you will know a God of providence as well" — they go hand in hand.

I have had some of the sweetest blessings through this great trial.

Well, my dear one made good progress and we had signs that if all was well he would be coming out of hospital. This was almost twelve months after he went in.

David came out first on February 2nd, having been in hospital for a day less than a year. When he went into hospital originally, they told him it would be for three weeks. When this had come and gone, they

told him he would have to stay and would not be going home. He never once asked to come home, although he later told me that he thought he would never see his home again.

About a month later Jim came home; how thankful we felt! I spoke to the sister as I was leaving. I asked her if she thought my husband would ever work again. She hesitated for just a fraction of a second, to spread a doubt in my mind, and then said, "O yes, Mrs. Field." I asked, "How long do you think?" She was a bit vague and it made me wonder.

Later that year David was able to go back to school, part time at first. Andrew continued in hospital; he came out about September, after being in there over a year. He was now turned three and such a nervous little boy after being shut away for so long. He was nervous of everything.

Her family writes:

Whilst she had both her husband and two sons in hospital, Mr. Hayler came and preached concerning Elijah and was much helped. Speaking to her afterwards, he said, "You now know who your true friends are." She replied, "Yes, I do, and they're not all Strict Baptists." To which he responded, "Ethel, they're the ravens." So she had to prove them to be. Many of her neighbours supplied her at times with goods and services. One neighbour in particular supplied her with almost a continuous supply of cracked eggs and forked potatoes from her smallholding during this period — at times it was all she and her daughter had to eat for a number of days.

"More likely to rob than to feed,
Were ravens, which live upon prey;
But when the Lord's people have need,
His goodness will find out a way."

After a short period at home, her husband had to return to hospital again. Mr. Jesse Delves, visiting Coventry at that time, preached from, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you," which was made a great blessing in the new trial which was laid upon her. This period of hospitalisation was used of the Lord to provide for them providentially. Whilst in hospital her husband was taught cane work and through this means he was able to support the family for three years, until he was able to go back to regular work. On the Friday as he went back to work on the Monday, the outlet for this work dried up, but the need for it was finished. The sisters on the ward also arranged for monthly Red Cross parcels to be sent to the family and through the Lord giving her favour in the eyes of the shopkeeper who distributed the parcels, the family often received more than their allotted parcel.

Little is left on record otherwise of these years. Her husband, although enabled to return to work until taking early retirement, remained in a sickly state of health, suffering latterly with emphysema. After his death, on March 13th, 1979, she continued to live in the cottage in which they had spent all their married life. Naturally things were tight and she was greatly tried how she would manage financially. Staying with her sister-in-law and brother-in-law in Sussex, she awoke on the Sabbath morning and felt very downcast that she appeared to have nothing more to pray over than her finances. When she got to chapel that morning (Hope, Blackboys) the first hymn given out was;

“Elijah’s example declares,
Whatever distress may betide,
The saints may commit all their cares
To Him who will surely provide.”

The text Mr. Jupp took that day was, “Let thy widows trust in Me” (Jer. 49. 11). What a day it was to her soul! She frequently mentioned it in later years.

In 1982 her daughter married and set up home a hundred miles away. On one of the first visits home after their marriage, Mrs. Field told her daughter and son-in-law that before they unpacked their case on arrival she wanted them to sit down as she had something to tell them. That something was this: “Godliness with contentment is great gain.”

Although many hours were spent alone, often not hearing another voice for a whole day, the Lord’s presence was often with her and she would drop comments in passing that this was so.

Not long after this, the Lord greatly favoured her particularly whilst sitting round the Lord’s table. The text preached from that day had been, “Bread corn is bruised,” and the Lord’s servant had dwelt upon the Lord’s sufferings at Calvary. She was given such a view of those hands nailed to the cross, she could enter into the words of the hymnwriter,

“His hands are fairer to behold
Than diamonds, set in rings of gold;
Those heavenly hands that on the tree
Were nailed, and torn, and bled for me.”

The closing hymn (827 in Gadsby’s) came just where she was.

Providential trials still attended her path, but she had to prove again and again the truth of the promise given to her husband many years before his death, that her bread and water would be sure.

Returning from the week-night service one week, she attempted to open her front door only to find the key would not turn. Those who had brought her home helped her gain access to her cottage, only to discover she had been burgled. Although upset at the time, she sent her friends

and family away telling them she would be quite alright to spend the night alone. She was able to tell her daughter the following morning that she had awoken around 3 a.m. from a “sweet sleep” and sitting up in bed, not feeling at all afraid, had sung the hymn,

“A sovereign Protector I have,
Unseen, yet for ever at hand.”

So she proved, right down to her last breath – He did not fail her.

As age increased, so did physical limitations. This concerned the family, particularly her daughter who felt to be a long way away from her mother. The future path, though hidden, was clearly in the Lord’s hands. The family attempted to persuade her to put her name down to go into Bethesda, but she responded by saying, “If I have my way I want to live with my daughter.” She awoke that night feeling very tried because she had looked only to the way she wanted; she had to sit up and beg forgiveness from the Lord. The Lord broke in with these words,

“Jesus Christ, your Father’s Son,
Bids you undismayed go on.”

She asked the Lord to confirm to her that it was a word from Him. Staying at Luton, Mr. Ramsbottom stopped whilst preaching and said, “I feel this word is for someone here:

‘Jesus Christ, your Father’s Son,
Bids you undismayed go on.’”

She said afterwards she felt she had to continue in her own little abode and could not put her name down to go into Bethesda, but trust the Lord for the future. She proved the Lord knew best.

Going to stay with her daughter and family for Christmas in 1993, she was due to return home in the January. A few days before she was due to return home, she was out shopping with her daughter when she suffered a stroke. Having got her back to their house, a further stroke followed early the following morning. Her condition gradually improved, but during this period it became clear that she could not return home. After some discussion it was decided she would live with her daughter.

One Sabbath morning the Lord broke in with these words;

“There shall your eyes with rapture view
The glorious Friend that died for you,
That died to ransom, died to raise
To crowns of joy and songs of praise.”

For a few moments the sweetness of the blessing received at the ordinance several years before returned. Thereafter she frequently

referred to this verse and obviously looked forward to that day when she would no longer see through a glass darkly, but see as face to face.

She suffered a heart attack one Sabbath evening and in March had to enter hospital following another stroke. After a fortnight she was able to leave hospital, but remained very weak in body. One Saturday evening, one of her grandsons discovered her on the floor in her room, her speech having been momentarily lost following another stroke. During the next half-an-hour, being unable to communicate with those around her, she appeared evidently enraptured by a view outside the window. Her family were unable to see what she so urgently pointed at. Giving her a pen and paper all she kept writing was "white," "white." The words, "They shall walk with Me in white," and the hymn:

"Yes, I shall soon be landed
On yonder shores of bliss
There, with my powers expanded,
Shall dwell where Jesus is,"

were quoted to her and the tears rolled down her face. Later, she was able to tell her daughter she had "seen the choirs and heard the singing."

She obviously felt her time on earth was drawing to an end. The words, "They shall walk with Me in white," were again made special to her during this time.

She gradually declined during the following week. Her son-in-law slept on the floor of her room so as to be on hand should she require it. He was woken many times to hear her pouring out her soul to the Lord in prayer for her family, the churches at Attleborough and Tenterden and for the denomination at large. The words of the hymnwriter were true in her case:

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gates of death,
He enters heaven with prayer."

The day before she died, there was a marked deterioration in her condition and she drifted in and out of consciousness. Hearing her daughter pass the door of her room, she called out and told her to get her taken into hospital. Her daughter reminded her of her previous stay in hospital during March which had been a great trial to her. She replied, "But I will not be in there long." Her daughter asked her how she could be so sure. To this she responded, "He has come and told me my robe is ready." Hearing this, her daughter and son-in-law felt they could let her go and she was admitted to hospital. She never regained consciousness, but passed peacefully into the presence of her Lord at 8.50 a.m. on June 12th, 1997.

BOOK REVIEWS

Songs of the Nativity: Selected Sermons on Luke 1 and 2, by John Calvin; hardback; 258 pages; price £15; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Calvin was without doubt a great man. Past generations have prized his writings, especially his *Institutes* and his commentaries. His very name (“Calvinism”) has become almost synonymous with the doctrines of free and sovereign grace.

But in recent years The Banner of Truth Trust has emphasised Calvin *as a preacher*. This is how he specially thought of himself, and what he considered his life’s work, preaching almost daily in Geneva.

Songs of the Nativity contains fourteen sermons on Luke chapters 1 and 2, preached between October 1559 and March 1560. These are newly-translated from French, and only one has ever appeared in English previously. Especially are they from the songs of Mary, Zacharias, the angels and Simeon. It seems that Calvin preached with his Greek Bible before him, and when he quotes Scripture, he translates directly from the Greek.

The translation by an Australian, Robert White, runs smoothly and is obviously a labour of love. We are a little perplexed, though, at times by modern colloquialisms. For instance, “pulling a long face,” “loggerheads,” “make a splash,” “play a double game,” “end up chuckling,” “for two pins,” etc.

The publishers, in sending forth this book, stress the vital importance of the truth of the virgin birth.

Calvin’s sermons are beautifully simple, and there are some lovely thoughts, for instance, on the shepherds, and a deep and profitable opening up of Simeon’s blessing of the Child Jesus.

Interspersed are Calvin’s short prayers at the beginning and end of the sermons. These are very gracious. For instance:

“Now let us cast ourselves down before the majesty of our good God, conscious of our faults, praying that we may truly see them as they are and renounce the foolish opinions which once deceived us, and with which Satan and his guile still bewitch poor folk. Let us also lay hold of the infinite kindness He has shown us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and since He so mildly and mercifully invites us to come to Him, let us learn to obey Him and to have done with all that hinders us. May we be willing to be brought low, so that He might lift us up by the powerful hand of His Son whom He has appointed to lead and govern us. And may our confidence never waver, but be firmly fixed in Him.”

2009 is the 500th anniversary of Calvin’s birth. There will be many meetings and publications, and *Songs of the Nativity* is a good beginning.

Scottish Puritans: Select Biographies, edited by W.K. Tweedie; hardback; two volumes, 544 pages and 542 pages; price £32 for the two; published by the Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

When we received for review the two-volume set, *The Scottish Puritans*, we expected something similar to the recently-reviewed *The Calvinistic Methodist Fathers of Wales*. We could not have been more mistaken; the two sets are completely different. Yet *The Scottish Puritans* is a real treasury – if rightly understood.

These two volumes are reprints of two books published by The Wodrow Society. From the times of the Scottish Covenanters, there survived many manuscripts, of real value, but never published because of the tumultuous times in which they were written. The Wodrow Society was founded in 1841 to remedy this, and by 1850 twenty-six volumes had been printed.

In *The Scottish Puritans* there is great variety in length, style and content. For instance, there is a very brief life of the eminent David Dickson, but a long autobiography of John Livingstone. The comparatively short life of John Welsh contains things which are seemingly apocryphal. Some of the writings are in such ancient Scots dialect that, despite an excellent glossary, they are difficult to understand. For instance, the extracts from the Records of the Kirk Session of Ayr and the letters of Lady Culross.

When published by the Wodrow Society, the Editor claimed that the books would be “storehouses and authorities for future biographers and historians” – and so it has proved. Many of the well-known stories are obviously taken from these sources. It certainly is gratifying to read of one writing about Samuel Rutherford, whom he knew well, and one who was present when David Dickson, before he died, exclaimed that he had taken all his bad deeds and good deeds, thrown them into a heap, and fled from them to Christ.

We were very touched by the account of James Fraser of Brea’s imprisonment on the notorious Bass Rock. As he was remanded to prison, he wrote, “But in my darkness was the Lord a light round about me; Him they could not shut out from me: for that night did I get a most kindly and comfortable visit from the Lord Jesus, and I had one of the most sweet nights I had for ten years before that.”

Two accounts we specially liked.

1. The account of a land-labourer, John Stevenson, written by himself. His minister testified of him that he was the godliest man he ever knew. This account is not only very gracious, but extremely interesting, especially when he writes of his adventures when the Covenanters were hounded day and night by the English soldiers. He writes:

“I was made to take joyfully the spoiling of my goods, and with pleasure for His name’s sake wandered in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. I lay four months in the coldest season of the year in a haystack in my father’s garden, and a whole February in the open fields not far from Camragen. One night, when lying in the field near to Carrick-Miln, I was all covered with snow in the morning.”

2. The Last Words of Lady Coltness, who died June 8th, 1675, aged 37. Among other things she said:

“O free, free love! I look, look, look to this for mercy. I look to Thy righteousness, that imputed righteousness. I look to that satisfaction offered at Jerusalem for sinners; Thy blood crieth for better things than that of Abel. O blessed imputed righteousness! O blessed satisfaction! I renounce my own righteousness; it is all as rotten rags. Lord, I come unto Thee. Thou hast said, ‘All that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.’ O, O, O! free love!” Though one might dare to die for a righteous man, yet our Lord for His enemies. O wonderful love! Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.”

There is an extremely useful short foreword by the present Publishers, which *must* be read first – explaining some of the difficulties, e.g. that some parts are hard reading. “The uninitiated today, who plunge into *Select Biographies*, may be bewildered.” This may not be the best starting point for understanding Scottish church history. Also, very honestly, the Publishers admit that the Covenanters “were not models in all things”! They did not understand the principle of toleration. They believed that Scotland was a theocracy, like Old Testament Israel. But they were people of real godliness and grace.

We can endorse what appears on the back cover of Volume 1: “one of the great treasures of Scottish Christian literature.”

Let’s Study the Letters of John, by Ian Hamilton; paperback; 130 pages; price £6.75; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

There is surprisingly little written on John’s three Epistles, and we have never been enamoured with the best-known commentary, that by Robert Candlish, the nineteenth century Scottish preacher.

This by Ian Hamilton is certainly good – apart from the sad thing that the Authorized Version is not used.

We were very interested in two of Mr. Hamilton’s interpretations.

1. Propitiation “for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2. 2) he explains as: there is *no other* propitiation.

2. The elect lady (2 John 1) is taken to be a *church*, not a *person*.

Satan’s Seat, by Shaun Willcock; 66 pages; price £3.95 including postage; published by Bible Based Ministries, South Africa, and obtainable from Christian Watch (Resources), P.O. Box 3268, Leamington Spa, CV32 6YA.

The title of this book is derived from Revelation 2. 13. The author traces the errors held by the Roman Catholic church back to Nimrod through the church at Pergamos to Rome. He states on page 17 that, “Many people today are under the impression that the Christian church of Rome to which Paul wrote one of his epistles later became the Roman Catholic institution. This is entirely false. Roman Catholicism is *not* in any way Christian, and never has been,” giving Acts 20. 30, 1 John 2. 19 and 2 Timothy 4. 3, 4, as proof of this.

Whilst it is right to warn against the errors of Rome, and to state that she has not changed, to single out that church as the antichrist and its leader as the man of sin is, I feel, too narrow a view. For all false religion is antichrist. See the words of Jesus in Luke 11. 23. Satan has his agents even in our education system, which sadly today, with other government agencies, is anti-Christian.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

The blood of all the creatures in the world, even a sea of human blood, bears no more proportion to the precious and excellent blood of Christ than a dish of common water to a river of liquid gold.

John Flavel

CHRIST OUR SUBSTITUTE

Great was the price to justice due,
When Jesus would redeem His bride;
Nothing but precious blood would do,
And that must flow from His own side.

Yet from the heights of bliss He fled
On wings of everlasting love,
And groaned, and sighed, and wept, and bled,
The mountains of our guilt to move.

How glorious was the work He wrought
While dwelling on this earthly globe,
When each good deed and each pure thought
Conspired to weave our spotless robe!

Dressed in this robe, washed in this blood,
And ransomed from the power of hell,
We now have free access to God,
And justice likes the payment well.

Thus Jesus wrought our righteousness,
Our guilt sustained, our sorrows bore,
Secured our everlasting peace,
And triumphed o'er the serpent's power.

And now in heaven He lives to plead,
Before His holy Father's throne,
What He has suffered in our stead,
And sends us gifts and graces down.

And soon will this dear Saviour come,
In majesty and glory dressed,
And take His ransomed children home
To seats of everlasting rest.

Joseph Swain (1761-1796)

Our guide is the Bible, read with prayer in a spirit of humility and faith, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Where the line of revelation stops, there we must stop; or rather, where it enters into the unfathomable depths of eternal wisdom, there we must pause, and wonder, and adore. We must not dare to tread within the veil, or curiously to pry into those hidden mysteries which God has wisely concealed from mortal eyes. "Thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter," will quiet and satisfy every humble, loving, obedient, grateful follower of the Lamb.

Thomas Reade

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MAY 2009

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

“IN GOD’S ACCOUNT”

“It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting” (Eccl. 7. 2).

There are many in the house of mourning. Often it seems strange to them that the Lord should say, “It is better....” They long for deliverance. But the Lord does not say, “more pleasant,” “more happy,” “more comfortable.” He says: better.

The explanation seems to be in John Kent’s lovely hymn on, “Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well.”

“Well when they see His face,
Or sink amidst the flood.”

How often these words are sung carelessly! It is a solemn thing to “sink amidst the flood.” Is it well? Is it better?

“’Tis as well, in God’s account,
When they the furnace prove.”

It is a solemn thing to be in the furnace. But the words, “in God’s account,” seem to be the explanation of it all – and there is an intimate connection with Romans 8. 28: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.”

Is there less sin in the house of mourning? Is there more prayer, more gracious exercise? Are there more serious thoughts, of God and eternity? But is it (“in God’s account”) part of His gracious purpose, fitting, forming and fashioning His people for Himself? “This people have I formed for Myself: they shall shew forth My praise.” How clear the Word of God is! Chastisement is needful; the crucible is needful.

The young man made redundant finds it hard to see it. So does the parent with an afflicted child. So does the one in bitter disappointment; but, as Joseph Irons says:

“He keeps eternity in sight,
And what He does is ever right.”

Usually it is only afterwards, and often not in this life, that the child of God can see that “it is better.” “What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter.”

There are many paradoxes in Ecclesiastes chapter 7: how sorrow is better than joy. But one thing is clear: the sorrows of the people of God are all the sorrows they will ever know, while the pleasures of the wicked are all the pleasures they shall ever know: “the crackling of thorns under a pot” (verse 6), loud, bright, noisy, but soon ended for ever. This is what Moses saw, by faith, when he “chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.” He saw it in the light of eternity.

We are told: “And the living shall lay it to his heart.” And only the living ever will! May we be found among the living in Jerusalem who, through grace, lay these solemn things to heart and prove the house of mourning to be “better.”

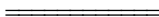
* * *

There is another side. “It is better *to go to the house of mourning...*” Do we visit the house of mourning? The world does not. The world does not like sorrow. The world does not like funerals.

But how sad when here is a disconsolate soul, brought low, hopes blasted, in deep sorrow, and the Lord’s people stay away! “I do not know them”; “I would not know what to say”; “It is not my business”; “Others can do it better than I.” These are not reasons but excuses and do not carry weight in the court of heaven.

What a blessing a simple, loving word, or a sympathetic tear, has been made! Even the great apostle when “in the house of mourning” was comforted by the visit of a young man (2 Cor. 7. 6). And we have known some, very shy and timid, who have made a practice of sending a loving card or a note of sympathy.

May the Lord sanctify these things to us.



There are no complaints more commonly heard among believers than of the poor work they make of praying, praising and thanksgiving. Hence they become painfully afraid lest their poor utterances should never obtain a hearing. But remember the great Intercessor, who stands day and night before God to receive such poor petitions of His people and to present them before the throne. Remember also that the sufferings and death of Christ, His obedience and righteousness – even the whole sum of His infinite and precious merits – make intercession for you and, as it were, pray with you.

Wherefore believer, if you can only utter three words before God; yea, if your very voice seem stifled at the foot of His throne, yet remember that He loves you with the same love with which He hath loved His Son, and as often as you pray, hold fast this confidence. Remember that your great Intercessor prays with you and for you, and that your prayers ascend through His righteousness. This will give unction to your petitions, and whatsoever you ask you will receive of Him.

Krummacher

ALL MY SPRINGS IN THEE

*Sermon preached by F.H. Wright, pastor at Hope Chapel, Rochdale,
at Grove Chapel, Camberwell, in May 1933*

Text: "All my springs are in Thee" (Psa. 87. 7).

Religion is brought before us in various guises. We are more concerned, I hope, for the revelation of divine grace, than for the mere observance of religious activities and duties. People can be "religious" who hold errors, and know nothing about the power of God's Word and His grace. More and more do we have to pray that He may deliver us from becoming merely "religious," particularly when we are engaged in His service.

A minister once confessed that it was a long time since he had read the Bible as a private individual. All his coming to the Scriptures had been concentrated upon the official aspect of his work as a minister. Surely, of all people the servants of God, in whatever capacity they are engaged, need to be constantly supplied by those springs that come forth from the Fountain lest they should become mere religious machines. It is easy to be rendering our service because we have it to do, to be attending our place of worship because it is expected of us, or because we are interested in the various parts of its organisation, or in certain men connected with it, but there are times when we need that divine anointing which will bring us back to the realities of religion.

How much religion do we possess that concerns our own private dealings with God, the work that is going on in our souls between us and Him? It would be a terrible thing if the multitude of our meetings and the variety of our activities became a substitute for actual contact with God in private. Again and again we need the public means of blessing, but mere attendance at a place of worship is no substitute for seeking greater nearness to Him in our own souls, so that in the various spheres in which we walk we may spend that which we receive from Him.

This Psalm begins with a beautiful reference to the sum and substance of true religion in regard to its foundation: "His foundation is in the holy mountains." Then having referred to the foundation of the church, David goes on to speak of its glories. Let us not forget that there are glories belonging to the church of God. Let us distinguish between the fact and the history of the church of God upon earth and the church as a whole. It is given unto us to be living in a day wherein, according to the judgment of men, there is a great withholding of the power of the Holy Ghost. We do not hear of the hundreds and thousands being brought under the power of the gospel as was the case a couple of centuries ago, and sometimes perhaps we are apt to lament the decline of God's cause.

The gathering into the church may vary from age to age, the manifestation of the Spirit may vary, but while to us Zion may appear to be clothed in its mourning clothes, it yet possesses glories indescribable. Let us not forget that there is the church in heaven as well as the church on earth. The work of God is not to be reckoned merely by what we can see of its activities or by what we know of its power. In heaven there are glories belonging to the church that are beyond human conception. O for an enlarged vision! We know not yet what shall be, even here upon earth, nor what shall be when all things in the purpose of God are complete. "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God."

There are various activities in the land ascribed to the inhabitants, and to the acute concern that they have in order to make people good and bring them into the possession of something real. There are movements everywhere, in educated circles, in social life, in business affairs, but how many of these movements emphasise the activities of man, and either minimise, or omit altogether, that which concerns good and evil. Movements must be examined in the light of the Scriptures, because whatever advance there may appear to be on earth, there has been no withholding of the testimony, and no repudiation of the Word, on the part of God.

There shall be praise in variety. "As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there," the element of rejoicing in the sphere of religion. Again and again we have to remind ourselves that religion is not simply interpreted by our sorrows and our griefs. "All my springs are in Thee," and so the psalmist, beholding something of the glories of Zion, and realising something of the beauties of its situation, is enabled with thankful recognition of the power of the living God to say concerning his own religion: "It comes from Thee."

Now that is the one thing that we would desire for ourselves, that we may be able to see that our religion comes from Him. At times we may be tempted to think that it is merely a matter of association, education, environment, example; there are many people who have found it difficult to answer the question: "Are you not of this particular persuasion because your parents were, and do you not attend a certain place of worship because you were taken there as a child?" But may we not ask where are all the people that went to Sunday school with us as children, and from whence came many people who will be ready to tell us that in their early days they knew nothing at all about the truth? God asserts His sovereignty in these as in other matters, and there are those who have been brought to a close examination of themselves concerning this question, and when they have remembered the example, training and influence of their youth, they have been brought in gratitude and humble dependence upon God to say, "All my springs are in Thee."

Surely in these words we have a very real and evident recognition on the part of the psalmist that *self-sufficiency stood for nothing*. "All my springs are in Thee." Some people are apt at times to look askance at others who are given to self-deprecation. Self-deprecation of itself is not a virtue. It is no sign of a divine work in the soul, simply to be calling myself nasty names, particularly if I am full of resentment the moment somebody else applies them to me. We ought not to adopt a mere practice of speaking of ourselves as unworthy things and helpless worms, without feeling it. To have a sense of our nothingness before God is a very humbling work. Would that there were more of that, but may we be delivered from an unfeeling use of humble phraseology.

Much that passes for religion consists of self, and is exemplified in the Word of God by such characters as the Pharisee in the temple who thanked God that he was not as other men, and contrasted himself favourably with the publican. Such characters exist today. There are many who take for their standard the worst people they can discover and, measured by them, feel that there is something to their advantage. We would not deprecate moralists. People who have a high standard of respectability and integrity are not to be despised, but they are to be reckoned in the right reckoning. The man who thinks that he is going to heaven because he is good in his judgment, and upright in the opinion of his neighbours, and keeps free from the law as he understands it, is deluded. The effect of the power of God upon a man is revealed to us through the prophet Isaiah: "At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made." At that day there shall be a dethronement of self.

Real religion begins in abasement before the holy God. Some have been troubled because the depth of their experience does not seem to equal the description that has been given of some particular individual. True religion is not to be measured by the extent of my self-deprecation and depravation in public, but by what I am, what I know myself to be before God, as I appear under His scrutiny, and in this matter the psalmist has wondrous company throughout the Scriptures. You find the work of God "in the year that King Uzziah died," when Isaiah "saw the Lord ... high and lifted up." The manifestation of God caused him to cry: "Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips."

It was so with other of the prophets; they did not exalt themselves, or triumph in their own victories, or extol their own goodness. Nor did the Apostle Paul, who might well have claimed that his standards of conduct were high. All the Pharisees are not to be included in the description that is applied to some of them, for there were Pharisees

whose code was very high, and Saul of Tarsus belonged to the strictest sect of them, but he was brought to the place where all this was repudiated, regarded as nothing, and whatever advantages he possessed in them, he could say that he counted them as dross. The one thing to him that mattered was to possess the Lord Jesus Christ. Moses, the greatest of law-givers; Abraham, the greatest man of faith; Jacob, mighty in prayer, all agree in disowning their self-sufficiency.

“All my springs are in Thee.” The source of real religion is clearly defined in the Word of God. It is evidence of man’s conceit and depravity of heart that he would invent a scheme of religion, that he would set up a substitute, a counterfeit. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of those who “have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me [saith the Lord], the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” But David says, “All my springs are in Thee.”

What is the source of every favour, the spring, the fountain-head of all divine recognition? We sometimes speak of the eternal decrees, the decrees of God, divine mercy, eternal love, and whilst we cannot describe the gracious activities of the Triune Jehovah in eternity to the satisfaction of finite reason, yet we feel that they are expressed in the Word of God so that they can be apprehended by the teaching of the Holy Spirit: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” There is the spring. No humble sinner ever went before God and pleaded that he possessed in himself anything to excite His favour. It is a terrible thing to suggest that God in His holiness could look down from His throne of glory and see something about us which prompted Him to invest us with the blessings of eternal love. Prophets and apostles have declared down the ages that there is no other fountain but that eternal love, that purpose of mercy, that rich, divine grace which are set forth in the Word of God.

The source of every favour, of all mercy, of all love, is not in works of righteousness which we have done, but in God’s mercy. There are those who sometimes find their sweet employ in tracing out, so far as they are enabled, the ways of God with their souls, the various instruments that He has used, His various providential dealings, the words that He has applied, and they go back to times of love, times when they can join with the mystic spouse and say: “His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.” They go back, it may be, to a circumstance which was the means of giving them liberty, or to a testimony that released their soul under divine teaching, or to something that stopped them in their career of sin, something that made them see that they stood bare in the divine presence, and they trace all the work, all the activity, back to the fountain, God. It is a matter for gratitude, for praise. The soul that

dwells near to Him will delight to trace to His love every act of mercy and every demonstration of favour.

“O wonder above wonders,” said John Newton. “Why should God love? Why should He love me? Why should He continue to love me?” The psalmist speaks of the source in the Father’s love, brought nigh to us by the Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of God the Holy Spirit, and not only of the source, but also of the *supply* when he says, “All my springs are in Thee.”

“With Thee is the fountain of life.” What for? The prophet Zechariah gives one answer when he speaks of the “fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness,” and Cowper comments on this when he says,

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

The spring, the stream of love, issues from the fountain that is opened “for sin and for uncleanness.” Not a mere religious expression, nor a mere theological statement, but a fact of experience. Some of us have realised ourselves to be filthy, black, undone. In our early days we may have been inclined to regard these phrases as a mere part of a minister’s religious stock-in-trade. But there have been times when we have had to learn that this cleansing is a real operation.

The prophet Ezekiel in his wonderful vision of the waters refers to their healing efficacy. Toplady expresses this thought when he writes:

“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.”

Not only is sin filth, but it is also sickness, foul, incurable disease. Cowper has tried to express it:

“Heal us, Immanuel, here we are,
Waiting to feel Thy touch;
Deep-wounded souls to Thee repair,
And, Saviour, we are such.”

In the Book of the Revelation we find a description of the river, on either side of which grew “the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits ... and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” “There is a river,” says David, “the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,” gladdening where it goeth.

“All my springs are in Thee.” Guilty, sinful, defiled, diseased, all these things have to do with badness, but, in the religion of the Bible, in the gospel of the grace of God, in the revelation of His dear Son, in the message concerning His love, there is “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Those whose springs are in God will have their occasions of gladness, brief perhaps, with long pauses between, but there shall be for them the great occasion when their souls shall rejoice and be glad in Him, for “with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.”

“All my springs are in Thee.” The streams from the spring are experienced by the people of God. What are the effects of them? “Ye shall have peace,” said the Lord Jesus to His disciples. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” And not only peace enjoyed, but power. “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” There is gladness in the heart, joy in the soul. Sometimes there is a gladsome dwelling upon the stream, its peace streaming forth into the soul, and then issuing from it. We are apt to think of the church as something that is so circumscribed that its influence is unfelt, its power unrecognised, but the children of God are not self-contained units. The river, these streams, these waters that flow from the throne of God are bound to spread, and abound in blessing.

There are some who are inclined to the idea that gracious influence is restricted to the expounder of the Word, the teacher, the preacher, but it is not so. One of the greatest devices of Satan would be to dam the stream, to stop its flow, and sometimes he may suggest to you: “There is no flowing in your heart, no love to God in your soul, and nothing to prove that you have any real religion,” and you may be inclined to believe him.

Those who are enabled to say, “All my springs are in Thee,” will manifest the fact, if not so eloquently as they desire: “Thy name is as ointment poured forth.” Where is that name but in the believer! It is through the people of God that He is manifesting Himself, and the Lord Jesus Christ promised that what He had been to them, the Holy Ghost would be: “He shall testify of Me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning.”

Finally, may we not say that here is a gracious testimony, a grateful song: “All my springs are in Thee.” It is not only a song of praise, but it is also an expression which contains a prayer. Unless the living water flows to us from Him, we shall be empty. Ours is an ancient prayer: “Spring up, O well.” Sometimes under His blessed teaching, in the preaching of the Word and in meditation, something flows to us which makes us assent to the testimony of the psalmist. O for some of the bubbling up, and then shall we delight to say, not only of Him, but to

those who belong to Him: "All my springs are in Thee," and the prayers then that will go forth from your lips will be that others, instead of hewing them out broken cisterns that hold no water, may be brought to Him, and be enabled to say,

"O Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love."

Mr. Wright was greatly beloved. He died three years after preaching this sermon, at the age of 51.

THE GROUND OF HOPE

Address given by Vernon Farley, 1963

Reading: Micah chapter 7, verses 1 to 9.

The prophet's grief and sorrow for the state of things in the church and nation, together with his deep sense of love for them, are most exemplary. You will notice that he does not lay the blame wholly upon others, but associates himself with the sins of the people: "*I will bear ... for I have sinned*" (verse 9).

There is a sombre background to the subject, for the prophet labours under a solemn sense of the divine indignation. There is, however, a measure of relief felt by him, and it lies in the fact that this "indignation" is but for a season; it is not for ever, for he says, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, *until* He plead my cause." As if he would say, "*until*" – that brings relief, that eases the mind; there is a prospect of salvation coming. What is it that makes the indignation of the Lord tolerable? It is the prospect of His coming to our aid.

And where is the ground of the good man's confidence? You will find it in the last three verses of the chapter. In verse 18: "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy." This wonderful verse shows the ground of the prophet's hope that God will deal with their sins both positively and negatively. He pardons, He passes by – there is the positive; He retains not – there is the negative.

In this scripture the Lord puts away the *guilt* of sin. In the next verse, 19, "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," the Lord there shows how He will take in hand that other branch of our trouble, even to subdue the *power* of our iniquities.

And lastly, the ground and foundation of it all; verse 20: “Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.” The ground of his hope is not in reformation – though necessary; not in repentance – though vital and important; not in faith – though most precious; *but wholly in the eternal covenant of God.* And where the Lord is pleased to give this godly sorrow and true confession of sin, it is the earnest of the coming blessing; it portends that salvation is in sight.

May the Lord grant us a measure of that same humility and self-abasement that the prophet had. May He show us how to mourn and not despair; for who is a God like unto our God?

PERSEVERING FAITH

The Faith of the Syrophenician Woman and the Spiritual Interpretation of this Gospel (Matthew 15. 21-28)

By Martin Luther (1483-1546)

This gospel presents to us a true example of firm and perfect faith. For this woman endures and overcomes in three great and hard battles, and teaches us in a beautiful manner the true way and virtue of faith, namely, that it is a hearty trust in the grace and goodness of God as experienced and revealed through His Word. For Saint Mark says she heard some news about Jesus in Mark 7. 25. What kind of news? Without doubt, good news, and the good report that Christ was a good Man and cheerfully helped everybody. Such news about God is a true gospel and a word of grace, out of which sprang the faith of this woman; for had she not believed, she would not have thus run after Christ. In like manner, we have often heard how Saint Paul, in Romans 10. 17, says that faith cometh by hearing, that the Word must go in advance and be the beginning of our salvation.

But how is it that many more have heard this good news concerning Christ, who have not followed Him, and did not esteem it as good news? Answer: The physician is helpful and welcome to the sick; the healthy have no use for him. But this woman felt her need, hence she followed the sweet scent, as is written in the Song of Solomon 1. 3. In like manner, Moses must precede and teach people to feel their sins in order that grace may be sweet and welcome to them. Therefore, all is in vain, however friendly and lovely Christ may be pictured, if man is not first humbled by a knowledge of himself and he possesses no longing for Christ, as Mary's song says, “He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away” (Luke 1. 53). All this is spoken and written for the comfort of the distressed, the poor, the needy, the

sinful, the despised, so that they may know in all times of need to whom to flee and where to seek comfort and help.

But see in this example how Christ like a hunter exercises and chases faith in His followers in order that it may become strong and firm. First, when the woman follows Him upon hearing of His fame and cries with assured confidence that He would, according to His reputation, deal mercifully with her, Christ certainly acts differently, as if to let her faith and good confidence be in vain and turn His good reputation into a lie, so that she could have thought, Is this the gracious, friendly Man? or, Are these the good words that I have heard spoken about Him, upon which I have depended? It must not be true; He is my enemy and will not receive me; nevertheless He might speak a word and tell me that He will have nothing to do with me.

Now He is as silent as a stone. Behold, this is a very hard rebuff, when God appears so earnest and angry and conceals His grace so high and deep, as those know so well who feel and experience it in their hearts. Therefore she imagines He will not fulfil what He has spoken, and will let His Word be false; as it happened to the children of Israel at the Red Sea and to many other saints [i.e. they imagined it].

Now, what does the poor woman do? She turns her eyes from all this unfriendly treatment of Christ; all this does not lead her astray, neither does she take it to heart, but she continues immediately and firmly to cling in her confidence to the good news she had heard and embraced concerning Him, and never gives up. We must also do the same and learn firmly to cling to the Word, even though God with all His creatures appears different than His Word teaches. But O how painful it is to nature and reason that this woman should strip herself of self and forsake all that she experienced, and cling alone to God's bare Word, until she experienced the contrary. May God help us in time of need and of death to possess like courage and faith!

Secondly, since her cry and faith avail nothing, the disciples approach with their faith and pray for her,* and imagine they will surely be heard. But while they thought He should be more tenderhearted, He became only the more indifferent, as we see and think. For now He is silent no more nor leaves them in doubt; He declines their prayer and says, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This rebuff is still harder since not only our own person is rejected, but the only comfort that remains to us, namely, the comfort and prayers of godly and holy persons are rejected. For our last resort, when we feel that God is ungracious or we are in need, is that we go to godly, spiritual persons, and there seek counsel and help, and they are willing to help as love

* Not all commentators take this view. Some think the disciples wanted her sending away because she was a nuisance.

demands; and yet that may amount to nothing, even they may not be heard and our condition becomes only worse.

Here one might upbraid Christ with all the words in which He promised to hear His saints as in Matthew 18. 19: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them." Likewise in Mark 11. 24: "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them"; and many more like passages. What becomes of such promises in this woman's case? Christ, however, promptly answers, and says, Yes, it is true, I hear all prayers, but I gave these promises only to the house of Israel.

What do you think? Is not that a thunderbolt that dashes both heart and faith into a thousand pieces, when one feels that God's Word, upon which one trusts, was not spoken for him, but applies only to others? Here all saints and prayers must be speechless; yea, here the heart must let go of the Word to which it would gladly hold, if it would consult its own feelings.

But what does the poor woman do? She does not give up; she clings to the Word although it be torn out of her heart by force, is not turned away by this stern answer, still firmly believes His goodness is yet concealed in that answer, and still she will not pass judgment that Christ is or may be ungracious. That is persevering steadfastness.

Thirdly, she follows Christ into the house, as Mark 7. 24, 25 informs us, perseveres, falls down at His feet, and says, "Lord, help me." There she received her last mortal blow, in that Christ said, in her face, as the words tell, that she was a dog, and not worthy to partake of the children's bread. What will she say to this? Here He presents her in a bad light; she is a condemned and an outcast person, who is not to be reckoned among God's chosen ones.

That is an eternally unanswerable reply, to which no-one can give a satisfactory answer. Yet she does not despair, but agrees with His judgment and concedes she is a dog, and desires also no more than a dog is entitled to, namely, that she may eat the crumbs that fall from the table of the Lord. Is not that a masterly stroke as a reply? She catches Christ with His own words. He compares her to a dog; she concedes it, and asks nothing more than that He let her be a dog, as He Himself judged her to be. Where will Christ now take refuge? He is caught. Truly, people let the dog have the crumbs under the table; it is entitled to that. Therefore Christ now completely opens His heart to her and yields to her will, so that she is now no dog, but even a child of Israel.

The spiritual interpretation of this gospel

All this, however, is written for our comfort and instruction, that we may know how deeply God conceals His grace before our face, and that we may not estimate Him according to our feelings and thinking, but

strictly according to His Word. For here you see, though Christ appears to be even hard-hearted, yet He gives no final decision by saying, "No." All His answers indeed sound like No, but they are not No; they remain undecided and pending. For He does not say, I will not hear thee; but is silent and passive, and says neither Yes nor No. In like manner, He does not say she is not of the house of Israel, but He is sent only to the house of Israel. He leaves it undecided and pending between Yes and No. So He does not say, Thou art a dog; one should not give thee of the children's bread; but, it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs; leaving it undecided whether she is a dog or not. Yet all those trials of her faith sounded more like No than Yes; but there was more Yea in them than Nay; aye, there is only Yes in them, but it is very deep and very concealed, while there appears to be nothing but No.

By this is set forth the condition of our heart in times of temptation; Christ here represents how it feels. It thinks there is nothing but No, and yet that is not true. Therefore it must turn from this feeling and lay hold of and retain the deep spiritual Yes under and above the No with a firm faith in God's Word, as this poor woman does, and say God is right in His judgment which He visits upon us; then we have triumphed and caught Christ in His own words.

As, for example, when we feel in our conscience that God rebukes us as sinners and judges us unworthy of the kingdom of heaven, then we experience hell, and we think we are lost forever. Now, whoever understands here the actions of this poor woman and catches God in His own judgment and says, Lord, it is true; I am a sinner and not worthy of Thy grace; but still Thou hast promised sinners forgiveness, and Thou art come not to call the righteous, but, as Saint Paul says in 1 Timothy 1. 15, "to save sinners." Behold, then must God according to His own judgment have mercy upon us.

King Manasseh did likewise in his penitence as his prayer proves; he conceded that God was right in His judgment and accused himself as a great sinner, and yet he laid hold of the promised forgiveness of sins. David also does likewise in Psalm 51. 4, and says, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest." For God's disfavour in every way visits us when we cannot agree with His judgment nor say Yea and Amen, when He considers and judges us to be sinners.

If the condemned could do this, they would that very moment be saved. We say indeed with our mouth that we are sinners; but when God Himself says it in our hearts, then we are not sinners, and eagerly wish to be considered godly and free from that judgment. But it must be so; if God is to be righteous in His words that teach you are a sinner, then you may claim the rights of all sinners that God has given them, namely,

the forgiveness of sins. Then you eat not only the crumbs under the table as the little dogs do, but you are also a child and have God as your portion according to the pleasure of your will.

This is the spiritual meaning of our gospel and the scriptural explanation of it. For what this poor woman experienced in the bodily affliction of her daughter, whom she miraculously caused to be restored to health again by her faith, that we also experience when we wish to be healed of our sins and of our spiritual diseases, which is truly a wicked devil possessing us. Here she must become a dog and we become sinners and brands of hell, and then we have already recovered from our sickness and are saved.

GODLY COUNSEL

*A letter by Samuel Rutherford to Thomas Corbet,
one of his parishioners at Anwoth*

Dear Friend,

I forget you not. It will be my joy that ye follow after Christ till ye find Him. My conscience is a fast of joy to me, that I fought in singleness of heart for Christ's love to put you upon the King's highway to our Bridegroom and our Father's house. Thrice blessed are ye, my dear brother, if ye hold the way.

I believe that ye and Christ once met; I hope ye will not sunder with Him. Follow the counsel of the man of God, Mr. William Dalgleish. If ye depart from what I taught you in a hair-breadth, for fear or favour of men or desire of ease in this world, I take heaven and earth to witness that ill shall come upon you in the end. Build not your nest here. This world is a hard, ill-made bed; no rest is in it for your soul. Awake, awake, and make haste to seek that Pearl, Christ, that this world seeth not. Your night and your Master Christ will be upon you within a clap; your hand-breadth of time will not bide you. Take Christ, howbeit a storm follow Him. Howbeit this day be not yours and Christ's, the morrow will be yours and His. I would not exchange the joy of my bonds and imprisonment for Christ, with all the joy of this dirty and foul-skinned world. I am filled with Christ's love.

I desire your wife to do what I write to you. Let her remember how dear Christ will be to her when her breath turneth cold, and the eye-strings shall break. O how joyful should my soul be to know that I had brought on a marriage betwixt Christ and that people, few or many. If it be not so, I shall be woe to be a witness against them. Use prayer; love not the world; be humble, and esteem little of yourself. Love your enemies and pray for them. Make conscience of speaking truth, when

none knoweth but God. I never eat but I pray for you all. Pray for me. You and I shall see one another up in our Father's house. I rejoice to hear that your eye is upon Christ. Follow on, hang on, and quit Him not. The Lord Jesus be with your spirit.

Your affectionate brother in our Lord Jesus,

S.R.

Aberdeen, 1637

THE LOVE OF CHRIST
By John Fawcett (1740-1817)

This is the most powerful inducement that can be proposed to us to excite our ardent affections towards the gracious Redeemer. Neither the reasonings of philosophers, the persuasions of orators, nor even the displays of divine goodness in the works of creation and providence, will answer this end, if our hearts are proof against the attractions of a Saviour's love. Can we contemplate the agonies He endured for us, and thus place ourselves under the beams of His unparalleled love, and not feel in our melting hearts some returns of affection and regard for Him?

The Apostle John speaks very justly when he says, "We love Him, because He first loved us." And another apostle makes use of very strong terms when treating on the same subject: "The love of Christ," says he, "constraineth us." The love of Jesus was most strongly manifested in His dying for us. What can be expected to attract our love, if this do not? He Himself speaks of it as that which should be efficacious in winning the hearts of men: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

They who are inattentive to the compassion of a dying Redeemer lose the strongest motive to love and obedience. They are acting the part of the foolish Galatians, who were carried away from this glorious subject by a kind of infatuation. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" O how desirable is it to be enabled constantly to behold Him by faith as crucified for us! Surely we should never forget that when He might have left us to perish, such was His love, He died that we might live; He endured the greatest agonies that He might snatch us from the jaws of destruction and open to us the gates of everlasting peace and felicity. Well may such a Saviour be precious to us. Surely they who love Him must have reason still to be grieved that they do not love Him more.

He hath loved us so as to ransom us with His blood, ransom us from a voluntary bondage, from a captivity the most vile and miserable, a

captivity from which nothing but almighty grace could have set us free. Could we have made any pretence to merit, the case had been different. But since we were totally unworthy, entirely helpless, wretched and undone, human vanity is for ever silenced, and boasting eternally excluded. It was the good pleasure of Him that saves us to love us freely.

It is this grace which tunes the harps of heaven and affords the saints in light a never-failing subject of harmony and praise. On this theme the spirits of just men made perfect fix their meditations. They admire the glorious mystery of the victorious cross, and sing the wonders of redeeming love.

This love is celebrated by them with peculiar praises: "They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And I beheld, and I 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."

What is most wonderful of all is that Jesus should show such love as this for *sinful* men, for men who were the enemies of God. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." His love to them was dying love, and in this the greatness of it most of all appears. When in His agony He sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground, it was for enemies. The shame and spitting to which He meekly submitted, the torments inflicted on His body, and the inexpressible sorrows which overwhelmed His soul, were all endured for enemies, to save them from ruin, and to exalt them to glory and felicity.

It was for that He submitted to have the arrows of divine vengeance spent upon Him, which occasioned His bloody sweat, and His awful outcry upon the cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" His body was rent, His heart was broken; according to the divine prediction, it melted like wax in the midst of His bowels. "Forthwith came there out blood and water." He endured all this for the honour of divine justice, or to take away the dishonour which we have done to God by our sins, and so to commend or set forth His love to us in the most striking manner possible.

"O for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Saviour's praises speak."

He suffered from the hand of justice as if His demerits had been infinite, though He was holy, harmless and undefiled. The reason was,

“The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Therefore He was “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” It was for our transgressions that He was wounded; it was for our iniquities that He was bruised. Our peace is procured by His chastisement and our healing by His stripes. If such a Saviour is not precious to us, nothing can equal our ingratitude. He died for those who spilt His blood, and who mocked Him in the midst of His severest agonies, as is evident from His intercession for them: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

O Thou loving Saviour! it is meet and right that every knee in heaven and earth should bow to Thee, and that every angel, and every saint should love Thee and adore Thee for ever!

The gracious manifestations of His love to our souls are exceedingly precious. “There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us!” This will put gladness into our hearts more than the increase of corn, or wine, or oil. Thy favour is life, yea, Thy lovingkindness is better than life itself.

O blessed Jesus, Thy love is wonderful! It is the admiration of angels, the joy and song of glorified saints. The experimental sense of it on earth sweetens the bitterness of life, and disarms death of all its terrors. It was love that moved Thee to bow the heavens, to come down and sojourn on earth, to humble Thyself, to take on Thee the form of a servant, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Thou didst pity me in my lost estate; Thou didst find me when I sought Thee not; Thou didst speak peace to me in the day of my distress, when the clouds of guilt and darkness hung heavy on my soul, and I was brought to the borders of despair. Thou hast borne with all my weakness, corrected my mistakes, restored me from my wanderings, and healed my backslidings. May Thy lovingkindness be ever before mine eyes, to induce me to walk in Thy truth. May it be the daily theme of my meditations, and the constant joy of my heart.

When I am favoured with the light of Thy countenance and the comfortable sense of Thy love, my soul is filled and satisfied. All the glories of the world are then darkened and turned into deformity. They are but broken cisterns; Thou art the fountain of living waters. The streams of created enjoyments are shallow and deceitful as a brook, but Thou art the full ocean of never-failing delight and satisfaction.

To Thy love I must ascribe my whole salvation; and through all the ages of a blissful eternity, I humbly hope and trust, I shall proclaim the wonders of redeeming love, and tell to listening angels what this love has done for my soul. “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.”

FOR JESUS' SAKE

By George Swinnock (1627-1673)

It was a sacred law among the Molossians that whosoever came to the king with his son in his arms should be pardoned, whatsoever offence he was guilty of. The Athenian general, therefore, when banished his country, fled to Admetus, King of the Molossians, his deadly enemy, and prostrated himself before him with his son in his arms, and found favour. God and man are enemies; there is no appearing before this dreadful King without His Son in our arms, and with Him there is no fear of a repulse: "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him" (Eph. 3. 12). As God and man are angry, Christ is *medium reconciliationis* – He makes them friends; as God and man are reconciled, Christ is *medium communionis* – He is the means of their communion with each other.

Therefore, reader, whatever thou doest, whether thou prayest, or hearest, or singest, or readest, "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3. 17). Consider, thy admission into God's presence is by Christ: "No man cometh to the Father, but by [the Son]" (John 14. 6). "Through Him we ... have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph. 2. 18). It is His blood which hath provided thee with this gracious privilege. He alone hath turned the seat of justice into a throne of grace. When thou approachest God, He would be a fire to consume thee, not a Father to embrace thee, were it not for His Son.

Consider also, thy assistance in duties [religious exercises] is from Christ: without Him thou canst do nothing (John 15. 5). O how dull and dead is thy heart in the most solemn duty, unless this Lord of life quicken it. Though thou hast a real principle of spiritual life, yet unless Christ draw thee, give thee quickening and inciting grace, thou canst not run after Him in a duty.

Further, thine acceptance in the ordinances of God is through Christ. O how unsavoury would thy best duties be, were it not for the odours of His most sweet sacrifice! The golden censer and the incense under the law typified that all our performances must be perfumed and presented by Christ before they can be accepted with God. The smoke of the incense must ascend with the saints' prayers before they can be pleasing. The incense (which signified the merits of Christ) is the pillar of smoke in which the believer's performances mount up to heaven (Rev. 8. 3, 4). No wonder that David begged so hard, "Let my prayer be set before Thee as incense." The priests, when they went into the tabernacle to sacrifice, were commanded to put off their own, and to put on the holy garments provided for them (Exod. 28. 43), intimating that none must approach God in the rags of their own, but in the robes of Christ's righteousness. The ark, which was a special type of Christ (without of shittim-wood,

speaking His humanity, within of wrought gold, typifying His deity) did signify thus much to us. It covered the two tables, so Christ the law; there God gave His precious answers, and was propitious to His people; so God accepteth the persons and prayers of men in Christ (Eph. 1. 6). If the patriarchs were welcome to Pharaoh, it was for Joseph's sake; and if the people of God are welcome at any time to Him, it is for Jesus' sake.

Faith in Christ is the eye which ravisheth the heart of God: "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes" (Song. 4. 9). Of all the virgin graces, none find such favour in His sight. This, this is the Esther on whose head He sets the crown. When she appears before Him, though it be contrary to the law of works, He constantly holds out the golden sceptre of grace. He is so delighted with her beauty, so ravished with her comeliness, that He granteth her request, be it to the half or whole of His kingdom.

Therefore, reader, when thou goest to God, be sure to take Christ along with thee, as ever thou wouldst speed. Let thy prayers and petitions be in His name, with an eye to His promise: "Whatsoever ye shall ask [the Father] in My name, that will I do" (John 14. 13). Let thy praises and thanksgivings be in His name, according to His precept: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5. 20). To be short, as a holy priest "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

THE ETERNAL COVENANT

By John Bunyan (1628-1688)

This is the beginning of the first book that Bunyan ever wrote, Some Gospel Truths Opened. Amazing is his gracious understanding of Scripture so early in his spiritual pilgrimage. He was 28.

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth their several judgments concerning the Son of the virgin Mary, the Lord Jesus Christ, and some of those many having most grossly erred from the simplicity of the gospel, it seemed good to me, having had some knowledge of these things, to write a few words to the end, if the Lord will, souls might not be so horribly deluded by those several corrupt principles that are gone into the world concerning Him....

I shall speak a few words concerning God's foreordaining and purposing that a Christ, a Saviour, should be, and that before the world began. Now God in His own wisdom and counsel, knowing what would come to pass as if it were already done (Rom. 4. 17); He knowing that man would break His commandments, and so throw himself under eternal

destruction, did in His own purpose foreordain such a thing as the rise of him that should fall, and that by a Saviour: "According as He hath chosen us in Him" (meaning the Saviour) "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1. 4). That is, God seeing that we would transgress and break His commandment, did before choose some of those that would fall, and give them to Him that should afterward purchase them actually, though in the account of God His blood was shed before the world was (Rev. 13. 8). I say, in the account of God, His Son was slain! that is, according to God's purpose and conclusion which He purposed in Himself before the world was; as it is written, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling ... according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1. 9). As also in 1 Peter 1. 20, 21, where the apostle speaking of Christ and the redemption purchased by Him for sinners, saith of Him, "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead."

God, having thus purposed in Himself that He would save some of them that by transgression had destroyed themselves, did with the everlasting Son of His love make an agreement, or bargain, that upon such and such terms He would give Him a company of such poor souls as had by transgression fallen from their own innocency and uprightness into those wicked inventions that they themselves had sought out (Eccles. 7. 29). The agreement also how this should be was made before the foundation of the world was laid (Titus 1. 2). The apostle, speaking of the promise or covenant made between God and the Saviour (for that is his meaning), saith on this wise, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began."

Now this promise or covenant was made with none but with the Son of God, the Saviour. And it must needs be so, for there was none with God before the world began but He by whom He made the world, as in Proverbs 8. 22-31, which was and is the Son of His love.

This covenant, or bargain, had these conditions in it:

First, That the Saviour should take upon Him flesh and blood, the same nature that the sons of men were partakers of, sin only excepted (Heb. 2. 14; 4. 15). And this was the will or agreement that God had made with Him. And therefore when He speaks of doing the will of God, He saith, "A body hast Thou prepared me" (Heb. 10. 5) (as according to Thy promise, Gen. 3. 15, which I was to take of a woman) and in it I am come to do Thy will, O God, as it is written of Me in the volume of Thy book (verse 7).

Second, The Saviour was to bring everlasting righteousness to justify sinners withal (Dan. 9. 24, 25). The Messiah, or Saviour, shall

bring in everlasting righteousness, and put an end to iniquity, as it is there written: "To make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." This, I say, was to be brought into the world by the Saviour according to the covenant, or agreement, that was between God and Christ before the world began, which God, that cannot lie, promised at that time (Titus 1. 2).

Third, He was to accomplish this everlasting righteousness by spilling His most precious blood, according to the terms of the covenant, or bargain; and therefore when God would show His people what the agreement was that He and the Saviour had made, even before the covenant was accomplished and sealed actually. See for this Zechariah 9 (where he is speaking of Him that should be the Saviour): "As for Thee also" (meaning the Saviour) "by the blood of Thy covenant," or as some render it, whose covenant is by blood (which is all to one purpose) "I" (meaning God) "have sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (verse 11).

The meaning is this: As for Thee also, seeing the covenant or bargain that was made between Me and Thee before the world was, is accomplished in My account, as if it were actually and really done, with all the conditions that were agreed upon by Me and Thee, I have therefore, according to that agreement that was on My part, sent forth the prisoners and those that were under the curse of My law, out of the pit wherein there is no water, seeing Thou also hast completely fulfilled in My account whatsoever was on Thy part to be done, according to our agreement.

And thus is that place to be understood in John 17. 9: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me" (which I covenanted with Thee for). "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me" (but on such and such conditions as are before-mentioned, Zech. 9). And again, "According as He hath chosen us in Him" (that is, in Christ) "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. 1. 4).

Now, seeing this was thus concluded upon by Those that did wish well to the souls and bodies of poor sinners, after the world was made by Them, and after They had said, "Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness" (Gen. 1. 26). And after man, whom God had made upright, had by transgression fallen from that state into which God at first placed him, and thrown himself into a miserable condition by his transgression, then God brings out of His love that which He and His Son had concluded upon, and begins now to make forth that to the world which He had purposed in Himself before the world began (Eph. 1. 4, 9; 2 Tim. 1. 9).

COMMUNION WITH GOD

*Prayer Meeting Address by J. Delves at Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham,
on January 5th, 1952*

Reading: Psalm 65 and Matthew 8. 1-13.

The psalmist here refers to the blessedness of those who are privileged with communion with God, and they are such as are chosen and appointed to this sacred privilege, which is one of the highest privileges which the Lord's people can enjoy upon this earth. "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and causest to approach unto Thee" (verse 4). That is one who is of necessity moved by the Spirit of God to pray, to approach unto God, to seek divine blessings, notwithstanding the fact that "iniquities prevail" against him. "Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away" (verse 3).

There is to every believer a satisfaction that can be found only in Christ, who is the life of the temple, the life of the church and the life of the soul. "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house" (verse 4). What is that? The goodness of His house is the gospel. It is that rich and free provision to which none have claim, but which is freely received and enjoyed. What an amazing mercy this is! There is a Man who receiveth sinners and eateth with them, and some of you know the nature of that secret. Blessed is the man, although he be overwhelmed with trouble, although iniquities prevail against him, although temptations assail him, yet blessed is the man who knows the amazing mercy of contact with God, and who enjoys that contact through the efficacy of atoning blood. That puts everything right in the conscience, and it puts everything right in our circumstances, and puts everything right in our prospect. All is well then. Blessed indeed are they who know it! It is a great secret, but it is a secret that is with those who fear God.

The psalmist here speaks of God's power, of His power in providence. "Which by His strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power: which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people" (verses 6, 7). The noise of the seas, and the tumult, not of the waves, but of the people: many voices in themselves bringing great confusion, and yet in the midst of that a voice, more effective than all beside, that brings a stillness. It is wonderful for any person to see the hand of God in their things, but it is more wonderful to feel the power of God in their souls.

Moreover, here too the psalmist speaks of the power of God's grace figuratively expressed and very sweetly too. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water" (verse 9) That wonderful inflowing of His love, who can express it? A touch brings heaven. Who can describe it? And yet each

can understand it who feels it, and can hold communion one with another under the influence of it. It is very blessed to have grace to speak well of God, and moreover to be softened by His amazing love. "There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High."

Again, here is the power of His judgments, a very solemn consideration. "By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O God of our salvation" (verse 5). And this may have respect to the way in which God may dispose to answer prayer. He may sometimes answer prayer in such ways as put you to confusion, by terrible things in righteousness, chastenings, fatherly judgments, the indignation of the Lord which is a fatherly correction. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord."

But this evidently refers more to the deliverances wrought for His people by His judgments upon their enemies. The meaning of this word is illustrated in that scripture where we read that the Israelites saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore, every one of them, and they never troubled them again. Truly they had other troubles, but not from those particular enemies. "By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O God of our salvation."

Well, may the Lord help us to pray, may the Lord give us to feel a little of the blessedness of that communion. "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest, and causest to approach unto Thee, that he may dwell in Thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house." You will not want anything more than what He gives. Of some foods we say they are so satisfying or filling. So in a far higher sense is that living bread. O the sweetness of that satisfaction! The Lord grant it to us! Amen.

Perform religious duties with faith as well as fear. Fear will keep the heart awful [full of awe] and faith will make it cheerful in the service of God: "Let us draw near [to God] ... in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10. 22). In ordinances man draweth nigh to God, but if he would do it with acceptance he must do it with affiance, with faith: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. 11. 4). Faith doth instrumentally justify both our persons and performances, because it looks up to, and lays hold on Christ, who justifieth both meritoriously.

God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil." Now there are many sins in our best services; we must therefore carry all our sacrifices (as the Israelites did, Exod. 28. 38) to our High Priest, who will take away the iniquity of our holy things, and procure their acceptance with the Lord: "He shall ... purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord" (Mal. 3. 3, 4). It is a prophecy of Christ. He shall purge away the dross from our duties, and then they shall be pleasing to God.

George Swinnock

THE MIRACLE OF MALTA

From A Very Present Help by Sir William Dobbie

Older readers will remember the miraculous way in which the Island of Malta was preserved during the 1939-45 War, and how the Governor-General, Sir William Dobbie, a Christian gentleman, ascribed it all to Almighty God. At the time the courage of the little island and the witness of General Dobbie made a great impression throughout Britain. The island was awarded the George Cross.

Today we are saddened by irreligion in high places and forgetfulness of God. We, therefore, wish to remind our readers of how the Lord so graciously answered prayer over sixty years ago.

So the Siege of Malta began. Some things were very evident – our weakness, the enemy's strength, the impossibility of outside human help for the time being and, not least, the vital importance to our country's cause of our holding on to Malta. These sombre facts were not pleasant to contemplate, and by themselves would have given cause for despondency. But, mercifully, they did not constitute the whole picture. Behind all the human factors was God, with whom human strength and human weakness matter but little. The horizon did indeed look black, but behind the clouds was the light of God's power.

As I, and others, contemplated these things, God's Word brought much encouragement. The story of Elisha at Dothan was much in my mind at that time. We were in the position of the servant who saw the enemy's host around the city: "Alas, my Master, how shall we do?" Elisha's answer means much to all who turn to God in their difficulties: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6. 16).

Hezekiah also had learnt the same lesson. When faced with great dangers, and when his people were uneasy as they contemplated them, he said, "Be not afraid ... for there be more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles." This was true in the case of Elisha at Dothan and Hezekiah at Jerusalem. It was also true for us in Malta in the tremendous and wonderful years 1940-1942. As in these other cases, God told us not to fear (the message from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff quoted in the last chapter bore this out*).

We did not, in Malta, as Elisha did in Dothan, see with our physical eyes the "horses and chariots of fire," yet we were very conscious of God's protecting hand, constantly evident in many ways. We saw it when He restrained the enemy from invading us at a time when we were

* General Sir Edmund Ironside: "Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God He shall fight for you" (Deut. 3. 22).

ill-prepared to resist. We saw it in the results achieved by our pitifully-weak air defences. We saw it in the steadfastness and courage of the people. We saw it in the achievements of the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy in bringing supplies to Malta, sometimes in seemingly impossible conditions. We saw it in many details, some big and some small, throughout the long-drawn-out period of siege, and as we now look back from the vantage point of a little distance, and see things, perhaps, in truer perspective – the very fact that, in spite of all her disadvantages, Malta has remained in British hands, and by the offensive action based on Malta she made a definite contribution toward our ultimate sweeping success in the Mediterranean – that, surely, is a miracle which cannot be gainsaid. It is God who works such miracles.

A few incidents during the siege which seem to illustrate this conclusion may be of interest and help. They are only a few out of very many, and are not necessarily the most remarkable. But they deal with matters which are of more general interest than others.

In January 1941, a convoy was brought to Malta. It was escorted by a considerable portion of the Mediterranean Fleet, and in the escort was a new aircraft carrier, H.M.S. *Illustrious*, a magnificent and very valuable ship. The convoy got into Malta, and the escort was manoeuvring at sea some distance to the south. The German *Luftwaffe* [air force] had recently come to Sicily in considerable strength, in order to reduce our offensive activities at Malta. They attacked the naval escort, and concentrated their efforts mainly against H.M.S. *Illustrious*. In spite of heavy losses, they pressed the attack and obtained a number of hits on her, causing severe damage.

That evening, after dark, *Illustrious* limped into Malta, and was made fast alongside the dockyard. It was necessary to effect first-aid repairs so that she might go to some other base for proper repair and reconditioning, which could not be effected at Malta. Next morning, the German aircraft came over Malta and saw the *Illustrious* in the dockyard. They renewed their attacks on her, and persisted in them, with the object of immobilizing the ship and preventing her from leaving Malta. She received several more hits and, in addition, serious underwater damage was caused by “near misses” of some heavy bombs.

The situation looked extremely serious, for the prospects of saving the ship were very small. But at this time I was informed by the dockyard authorities that *if there were no further damage*, it should be possible to get the ship to sea in four days’ time. On the face of it, this sounded encouraging, but the proviso, in reality, effectively discounted the encouragement, since damage had been constantly caused to the ship since she came to Malta. However, the statement was noted, and we hoped for the best. Some went further, and prayed earnestly that God

would help us in our difficulty which, humanly speaking, seemed impossible to overcome. And He did.

The next day came. The attacks were renewed, but the Germans changed their tactics and bombed from a much greater height than before. They missed the ship, and no further damage was done! The same thing was experienced on the three following days; and eventually, on the fourth day, after sunset, I saw the great ship steam out of the Grand Harbour and head for Alexandria, which she safely reached.

That incident made a big impression on me and on many others in Malta. To us it was a miracle. We had been watching the hand of God at work.

A somewhat similar incident occurred to another warship in the spring of 1942. At this time the German *Luftwaffe* were again in Sicily, in much greater strength than before, and were subjecting Malta to very heavy and continuous attacks. H.M.S. *Penelope*, a light cruiser based on Malta and operating against the enemy's sea communications with North Africa, was damaged, and had to be put into dry dock in Malta while certain repairs were effected. During her time in dry dock when she was in an unenviable and rather helpless position, she was attacked over and over again by the *Luftwaffe*. The attacks were heavy, frequent and persistent. The danger was not only to the ship but to the dock as well. If the latter had received certain damage, the ship could not have got to sea, even though she was not damaged herself. The fighter strength of Malta at that time was still most inadequate. Such fighters as we had, and the anti-aircraft guns of the fortress, as well as the guns of the ship herself, made heroic efforts to keep the enemy away, but did not achieve much success.

The ship sustained a good deal of damage, but although she had unbelievably narrow escapes, she did not receive *vital* damage – nor did the dock! The cruiser's safety was once seriously endangered by burning oil floating on the surface of the water and approaching uncomfortably close to the dock where the ship was lying. But it did not quite reach it! In spite of all the efforts of the enemy, and in spite, humanly speaking, of the odds against her survival, she did survive. She was floated out of the dry dock, and one evening set sail for Gibraltar. But her adventures were not over. On the voyage, as she passed Pantellaria, and traversed the Sicilian Narrows, and then passed between the air bases of Sardinia and French North Africa, she was subjected again and again to attacks of every description. But she won through to Gibraltar.

The ship's company, looking back on all they endured, were amazed that in spite of all, they had won through. They must have realised that but for God's help they could not have done so. And so say we all. It was indeed a miracle. "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side,

when men rose up against us ... then the waters had overwhelmed us.” That, indeed, seems to sum up this and many other incidents in the Siege of Malta.

One other instance of God’s protecting hand may be recorded. It is of a different nature.

In the centre of the Island of Malta is a village named Mosta. It is famous for its church, or rather for the dome of its church, which is the third largest dome in the world. Since it had been built by the people of Mosta, they naturally and quite rightly were extremely proud of it. It meant much to Mosta. In the spring of 1942 I was one afternoon watching the progress of an air raid, and while so doing I saw a bomb actually strike the dome of Mosta church. Knowing how deeply attached the people of Mosta were to their church, I was much distressed, and went round to Mosta to see for myself what had happened. I expected to see a scene of great desolation, but to my great relief, on arriving, I saw that the church was apparently intact.

I went in, and then I saw lying on the marble floor of the church an enormous bomb (I was told later that it weighed 4,000 lbs). I looked up and saw that a neat hole had been bored in the dome. The bomb, after boring this hole through the thick masonry of the dome, had fallen perhaps two hundred feet on to the hard marble floor of the church, and had not gone off! It had done no more than dent the floor. If it had gone off, there is no doubt that all the walls of the church would have been blown outwards, and the dome would have collapsed on to the ruins. It is also extremely probable that the many people sheltering in the crypt underneath would have been killed. The bomb was rendered harmless as soon as possible, and the people of Mosta breathed freely once again. To say that they were relieved is a gross understatement. But their thankfulness was tinged with gratitude to Almighty God, whose intervention they saw in the incident. As they said, “It is a miracle.” We cannot but agree with them.

But the greatest evidences of God’s help and His care were to be seen in the innumerable small mercies which we were constantly experiencing. Many of these are known only to oneself and God; many others would not take the fancy of outsiders, being insignificant and unshowy. But they were very real to the one who experienced them. As one now looks back on these signal proofs of His mercy and His gracious help, one can wholeheartedly say, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.”

Private prayers pierce the heavens, and are commonly blessed and loaded with gracious and glorious returns from there.

Thomas Brooks

OVERLOOKING THE FAULTS OF OUR BRETHREN

By Thomas Brooks (1608-1680) (See Book Reviews, page 158).

Satan has his devices to destroy the saints; and one great device that he has to destroy the saints is: *By working them first to be strange, and then to divide, and then to be bitter and jealous, and then "to bite and devour one another"* (Gal. 5. 15).

Our own woeful experience is too great a proof of this. The Israelites in Egypt did not more vex one another than Christians in these days have done, which occasioned a deadly consumption to fall upon some. If we knock, we break. Dissolution is the daughter of dissension.

The first remedy against this device of Satan is: *To dwell more upon one another's graces than upon one another's weaknesses and infirmities.*

It is sad to consider that saints should have many eyes to behold one another's infirmities, and not one eye to see each other's graces; that they should use spectacles to behold one another's weaknesses, rather than looking-glasses to behold one another's graces. Flavius Vespasian, the emperor, was more ready to conceal the vices of his friends than their virtues. Can you think seriously of this, Christians, that a heathen should excel you, and not blush?

Erasmus tells of one who collected all the lame and defective verses in Homer's *Works*, but passed over all that was excellent. Ah that this were not the practice of many that shall at last meet in heaven, that they were not careful and skilful to collect all the weakness of others and to pass over all those things that are excellent in them! The Corinthians did eye more the incestuous person's sin than his sorrow, which was like to have drowned him in sorrow.

Tell me, saints, is it not a more sweet, comfortable and delightful thing to look more upon one another's graces than upon one another's infirmities?

Tell me what pleasure, what delight, what comfort is there in looking upon the enemies, the wounds, the sores, the sickness, the diseases, the nakedness of our friends? Now sin, you know, is the soul's enemy, the soul's wound, the soul's sores, the soul's sickness, the soul's disease, the soul's nakedness; and ah what a heart has that man that loves thus to look!

Grace is the choicest flower in all a Christian's garden; it is the richest jewel in all his crown; it is his princely robes; it is the top of royalty; and therefore must be the most pleasing, sweet and delightful object for a gracious eye to be fixed upon.

Sin is darkness, grace is light; sin is hell, grace is heaven; and what madness is it to look more at darkness than at light, more at hell than at heaven. Not race or place, but grace truly sets forth a man.

Tell me, saints, does God not look more upon His people's graces than upon their weaknesses? Surely He does. He looks more at David's and Asaph's uprightness than upon their infirmities, though they were great and many. He eyes more Job's patience than his passion. Remember the patience of Job (Jas. 5. 11) – not a word of his impatience.

He that drew Alexander, whilst he had a scar upon his face, drew him with his finger upon the scar. God puts His fingers upon His people's scars, that no blemish may appear.

Ah saints, that you would make it the top of your glory in this, to be like your heavenly Father! By so doing, much sin would be prevented, the designs of wicked men frustrated, Satan outwitted, many wounds healed, many sad hearts cheered, and God more abundantly honoured. Sin is Satan's work; grace is God's work. And is it not most meet that the child should eye most and mind most his father's work?

BOOK REVIEWS

Truth for All Time, by John Calvin; small book with soft leather back; 144 pages; price £10; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We like this as much as anything of Calvin which we have read. The preface is true: "You have in your hands a small but priceless jewel." Written by the 29-year-old Calvin during the winter of 1536-7 with the title *Brève Instruction Chrétienne*, it is really a short résumé of his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This book has the value of being brief, and presented in a form that ordinary people could understand. It could well be entitled, "What We Believe." But it is not a hard compilation of facts, but a loving and gracious account.

Truth for All Time deals with: Knowing God; The Law of the Lord; Faith; Prayer; The Sacraments; and, Order in Church and State. Of course, we do not agree with Calvin that the children of believers are to be baptized, and he does not seem clear (like other Reformers) on the keeping of the Sabbath.

Translated from the French, it has only once previously appeared in English. We did not know that Stuart Olyott is a linguist, but his translation is excellent. He mentions the fact that when Calvin quotes Scripture, he is usually making his own translation from the original.

Truth for All Time is in the same format as the recently-published *The Loveliness of Christ* by Samuel Rutherford. The soft leather binding is intended to make it suitable for a gift.

Fearless Pilgrim: The Life and Times of John Bunyan, by Faith Cook; hardback; many illustrations; 528 pages; price £16.95; published by Evangelical Press, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We have always admired John Bunyan, but not until reading this magnificent biography did we realise what an outstanding man he was in

godliness and grace. What that godly man endured for Jesus' sake – and his young wife!

It is one thing to know that Bunyan was in prison for twelve years (so easily read) but another to read of the terrible prison conditions he had to endure, and the cruel separation from his little family – which almost broke his heart. How sad to read that it was the Protestant Church of England (not the Roman Catholics) who inflicted such vicious and intensely-cruel persecution on the poor Dissenters because they wished to worship according to conscience and the Word of God!

What is it that makes the book of such high quality? Not only does Mrs. Cook write in her usual excellent style (as in *William Grimshaw* and *Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*) but she has thoroughly researched the background to Bunyan's life, both political and ecclesiastical. So we are kept aware of what was happening in the nation and in the churches. Moreover, she has carefully read *all* Bunyan's writings. She herself makes the point that many who have written about John Bunyan are not conversant with his lesser-known writings.

The point we specially appreciated was the author's loving understanding and sympathy with Bunyan's inner struggles, his temptations, his doubts and fears.

This is a most interesting book – but solemn. In many places it searches our hearts. We believe it will in future years be regarded as the authoritative work on the life of John Bunyan. We highly recommend it.

Sinful Speech, by John Flavel; small paperback; 96 pages; price £3.25; **United We Stand**, by Thomas Brooks, small paperback; 64 pages; price £3.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

The Puritans were masters of experimental and practical divinity. They applied the truth to the conscience and life. These two little books in the new series of "Pocket Puritans" are by two "masters in Israel," John Flavel and Thomas Brooks.

The first part of *Sinful Speech* is taken from "A Caution to Seaman: A Dissuasive against Several Horrid and Detestable Sins," and the second part from "The Reasonableness of Personal Reformation." The first part reads more easily than the second – no doubt from being written for unlearned sailors!

Much of *Sinful Speech* is directed against swearing, oaths and blasphemy, but at the very beginning there is a most profitable section on careless, idle speech. Do we really glorify God in our conversation? This comes very close, and is probably more needed than the later warnings (especially to churchgoers).

United We Stand deals with sad divisions in the church of God. It comes from "Precious Remedies against Satan's Devices," and Brooks gives twelve remedies against sinful dissension. As usual he excels with telling illustrations.

The first "remedy" is so good ("Dwell more upon one another's graces than their infirmities and weaknesses") that we have included it on page 156.

The Undercover Revolution: How Fiction Changed Britain, by Iain H. Murray; paperback; 104 pages; price £4.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Iain Murray is a good writer so we look forward to what he writes, though we do not always agree.

In *The Undercover Revolution* Mr. Murray makes an extremely interesting point: that it was not really science and the belief of evolution that had such a tremendous effect on the country's beliefs and morals. Rather, he contends, it was literature, books, especially fiction. In 1870 the largest group of books being published was religion. Fiction came fifth on the list. In 1886 fiction headed the list.

Sadly the popular writers of fiction were atheistic, immoral men, and the whole bent of their writing was to offer a world of materialistic happiness, with hidden sneers at true godliness. Among these were Robert Louis Stevenson, Thomas Hardy, H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw. It is very solemn to read of R.L. Stevenson's godly upbringing, which he completely despised and rejected, and the apparent godliness of Thomas Hardy in his younger days, followed by open atheism. All this had a tremendous effect on moral opinion and the attitude to religion. It is popular writing which has had such devastating results.

What Dean Inge prophesied at the time has come true:

"No God. No country. No family. Refusal to serve in war. Free love. More play. Less work. No punishments. Go as you please. It is difficult to imagine any programme which, if carried out, would be more utterly ruinous to a country situated as Great Britain is today."

This book contains some very solemn truths. The final section emphasises that the truths of the everlasting gospel are *not* fiction.

The Children in '59, by Henry Montgomery; paperback; 32 pages; price £1.50 plus 50p postage; published by Mourne Missionary Trust, and obtainable from 3 Carginagh Road, Kilkeel, BT34 4NE.

This year is the 150th anniversary of the 1859 Revival in Ulster, "the year of grace." This book is a children's address on the Revival, first published in 1909. At the end is a short piece by Robert Murray M'Cheyne on young people fleeing to Christ.

Of the 1859 Revival it is said:

"People were made deeply anxious very unexpectedly. Sometimes a man would become anxious when at his work in a field; sometimes when driving a horse and cart, another would suddenly begin to pray to God for mercy; another away in a lonely cottage with no one near, would become strangely impressed about eternity, and would begin to cry aloud for mercy."

The remarkable thing is the way that children, some very young, were affected. There is no easy conversion or "take it for granted" here. The striking thing concerning the children's conversions was very deep conviction of sin and agonising cries for mercy. At the time this book was first written, obviously many were still alive and had remained in a consistent profession.

The comments by the author at the end are of a different quality and do not seem consistent with what has been said of the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. He uses expressions that savour of Arminianism: "ought to decide for Christ"; "early surrender their hearts and lives"; "yielded their lives to Christ."

In vain do men pretend to religion, while ungodly company is their choice.
Boston

THE FOOLISH VIRGINS

When descending from the sky
 The Bridegroom shall appear,
 And the solemn midnight cry
 Shall call professors near:
 How the sound our hearts will damp!
 How will shame o'erspread each face!
 If we only have a lamp,
 Without the oil of grace.

Foolish virgins then will wake
 And seek for a supply;
 But in vain the pains they take
 To borrow or to buy:
 Then with those they now despise,
 Earnestly they'll wish to share;
 But the best, among the wise,
 Will have no oil to spare.

Wise are they, and truly blest,
 Who then shall ready be,
 But despair will seize the rest,
 And dreadful misery:
 Once, they'll cry, we scorned to doubt,
 Though in lies our trust we put;
 Now our lamp of hope is out,
 The door of mercy shut.

If they then presume to plead,
 "Lord open to us now;
 We on earth have heard and prayed,
 And with Thy saints did bow":
 He will answer from His throne,
 "Though you with My people mixed,
 Yet to Me you ne'er were known,
 Depart, your doom is fixed."

O that none who worship here
 May hear that word, Depart!
 Lord impress a godly fear
 On each professor's heart:
 Help us, Lord, to search the camp;
 Let us not ourselves beguile,
 Trusting to a dying lamp
 Without a stock of oil.

John Newton (1725-1807)

From *Olney Hymns*, recently republished by Gospel Standard Trust Publications.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JUNE 2009

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

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

*Sermon preached at Clifton Chapel, on Friday evening,
April 17th, 2009, on the occasion of the Gospel Standard Society
Annual Meetings.*

Text: "And Israel sent messengers unto Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king's high way, until we be past thy borders" (Num. 21. 21, 22).

Israel, as a pilgrim people, were journeying towards Canaan. As they came to the land of the Amorites, through which they wished to pass, they sent a request to the king that they could pass through his land. It was enemy territory, but they wanted to pass through his land. But they would not turn to the right hand, they would not turn to the left. The king's highway that ran straight through, they would keep to that till they were past his borders.

Now, beloved friends, the Word of God makes it abundantly clear that Israel, as a pilgrim people journeying to Canaan, Israel in the wilderness, were a typical people, typical of the way God deals with His people and how they are called to behave in all ages. The Word of God makes this very clear, especially such passages as 1 Corinthians chapter 10. So by the analogy of Scripture we are warranted to look on a word like this in a spiritual sense.

This really should be the attitude, the posture of the people of God in all ages: their attitude to the Lord, their attitude to heaven, their attitude to the world. In the world but not of it; using it but not abusing it. So really there are just the two things this evening. The first is the King's highway that leads right through this world, and then the second thing is the obligation the Lord lays on all His beloved people to keep to the King's highway and not to be diverted; to look right on and keep their eyelids still before them; not to be attracted by the wells of this world or to wander into the fields of this world, but to press on. "One thing is needful," till at last they reach heaven.

This is a beautiful title (isn't it?), the way to heaven – "the King's highway." It leads right through this world, all the way to heaven. It goes through enemy territory. It is separate from it. It is raised up above it. You know, when we were children we used to sing that little hymn:

“There is a path that leads to God,
All others lead astray;
Narrow but pleasant is the road,
And Christians love the way.

“It leads straight through this world of sin,
And dangers must be passed;
But those who boldly walk therein
Will get to heaven at last.”

“The King’s highway.” Now, I take it we are warranted to speak like this because we have the very same expression in the chapter I read to you this evening (Isaiah 35). “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast ... but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return” – in the King’s highway – “and come to Zion.” Of course, our hymnwriter takes it up so beautifully, doesn’t he:

“The way the holy prophets went,
The road that leads from banishment,
The King’s highway of holiness
I’ll go, for all His paths are peace.”

“The King’s highway.” It is your mercy and mine if we are found walking in it. Now essentially this is the way to heaven. “Jesus saith, I am the way No man cometh unto the Father” – or to heaven itself – “but by Me.” And let us be clear, when Jesus said, “I am the way,” He did not mean, “I am the way,” in the teaching that I give you, though that is important. He did not mean, “I am the way,” in the example I have given you, though that is important. The Lord Jesus meant that He was the way to heaven as crucified for sinners.

We read this evening, it is “the King’s highway of holiness.” And we are all unholy. How can we walk in this holy way if we are unholy? And how can we reach that holy place where nothing that defileth can ever enter in? Christ says, “I am the way.” It is a way marked out in blood. It is a way in which sinners are led by the Spirit of God, confessing their sin, resting on the atonement, pleading the Redeemer’s blood, longing to be washed in it. It is a way in which though multitudes have walked, every one of them says, Christ is my only hope. Now, this is the King’s highway that leads to heaven. “An highway shall be there, and a way.” That is not really two ways; it is one and the same way. You see, it is Christ, but it is a way that must be walked out experimentally. How beautifully the apostle takes it up! He 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.”

All those who walk in the King's highway are sinners, but every one of them a sinner hoping only in the Saviour. It is a narrow way, and it has a strait gate to enter. I take it that a sinner enters by the new birth. It is a narrow way, but it is the *only* way, and it leads to heaven. This is that well-beaten track in which the people of God have ever walked as pilgrims and strangers. "We will keep to the King's highway." And the great point is to be in it and to be found walking in it. Do not forget the Saviour said, "Strive to enter in." Mr. F.L. Gosden used to say (and perhaps it was on one of these annual occasions), "You won't get to heaven *because* you strive to enter in, but you will never get to heaven *unless* you strive to enter in." It is the one thing that really matters, to be seeking salvation, to be journeying towards heaven, and the only way that we can journey is in Christ the living way.

Now this is the King's highway along which God's people travel, a pilgrim people. And let us be clear, you will never get to heaven unless you journey heavenwards. You say, What about the dying thief? Well, he did the journey quickly, didn't he? He seemed to learn more in those few moments than some of us have learnt in a lifetime. O, the dying thief, it was a short journey but it had a clear beginning and it had a blessed ending. And he knew that it was "the King's highway of holiness." Now, that is the great, the vital point. It is the King's highway because He has appointed it, He has provided it, He has set it up, He has marked it out, He has revealed it in His Word. O, sinners are welcome to walk in it, on mercy's ground. It is a way of mercy. It is a way of love. It is a way of salvation.

"The King's highway." Well then, if you will, these are directions how we ought to seek to walk along in the King's highway to heaven. "Let me pass through thy land." Of necessity we have to go through the world. Some of the old divines foolishly used to discuss, Why does not the Lord, when He calls a sinner by grace, immediately take him to heaven? It is the Lord's will that they should walk out this well-beaten track, the King's highway, that they should be witnesses. Did not the Lord Jesus pray before He died, "Father, I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil"? So, of necessity, we have to travel through this world, enemy country, if we would travel heavenwards. But the point is this, to look right on and not to turn to the right hand or the left, not to be diverted.

"Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king's high way." When the church starts wandering into the fields of this world or dabbling with the wells of this world, that is when the trouble begins, when Satan gets the advantage, when God's name is dishonoured. But Satan will always be trying to tempt you to turn away either on the right hand or the left, to wander in these

vineyards of the world, which are attractive to the flesh, or to go and drink of the wells of this world. You see, some people like to taste of the world's pleasures. That is one temptation. Some like to taste of its honours; some, of its ambitions; some, of its successes. So you might go on.

"But we will go along by the king's high way, until we be past thy borders." Now, beloved friends, I want to make it abundantly clear what this word does *not* mean. First of all, it does not mean that we are not to be concerned about the sad state of the nation; it does not mean that for a moment. We *should* be concerned, prayerfully concerned, and where necessary we should raise our voice. It certainly does not mean some kind of exclusivism, as a hermit or as a monk. It does not mean that at all.

Secondly, it does not for one moment mean that we are not to be concerned about the ills and the sorrows and the troubles of the world. The church of God has done more good *to* the world when it has been more separated *from* it than at any time. You think of those days when the truth was abundantly blessed in England, and that godly separation from the world, and you think of the wonderful witness in helping the poor and the needy. It does not mean for one moment that God's people have to shut their eyes to the sorrows of the world around them. It is still "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Recently a very important book has been published, and a lecture given, and also a pamphlet published, on that very point. And I believe in many ways it shocked the religious world and the evangelical world, and the point really is, that nobody did more good for the world around, the poor and the needy, than William Gadsby* and William Gadsby's friends and men like him. It was not the general religionist; it was these people who might have been called exclusive in their doctrine and in their separation from the world, but these were the people who devoted such time and such energy to be a help to those around them.

And the third thing is, it certainly does not mean that God's people should ever be unconcerned about the lost that lie about them. Now let us be very clear on those three points.

Well then you say, what does it mean? To pass through the world, not to go into its fields or vineyards, look right on, not to turn to the left hand, not to turn to the right hand? I believe it means this: that God's people should have singleness of purpose, singleness of heart. And that is why I read to you those few verses this evening in Philipppians chapter 3 (verses 1-14). I believe the Apostle Paul is the great example of walking out a word like this. Really, he puts this verse in a gospel sense, a New Testament sense. "This one thing I do." You say, There

* Ian J. Shaw, *High Calvinism in Action: Calvinism and the City, Manchester and London, 1810-1860* (Oxford, 2002), which has a lovely portrait of Gadsby on the front cover.

were so many things with the Apostle Paul. "One thing," singleness of eye, singleness of heart, his eyes fixed on Christ, seeking His honour and glory. "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." In the analogy here, forgetting Egypt and the leeks and the garlic and the onions, and reaching out towards the promised land of Canaan. "This one thing I do." This is Paul walking out a word like this. "Forgetting those things which are behind." Paul did not mean forgetting God's mercies; Paul did not mean forgetting what he had been as a sinner and what the grace of God had done for him. But he had his back to the world, and he had his face towards heaven; he had his back to the world forever. "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." Now this is it, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And that is what Israel was doing here, pressing toward the mark for the heavenly prize.

"Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards." Why? Because we have something better than the world can give us. We have known both sides; the world has not. The world has only known one side; we have known both sides. And we know which we prefer! We do not want to go back wandering in the vineyards of this world, or the fields of this world. Surely we can say,

"Then let the worldling boast his joys,
We've meat to eat he knows not of;
We count his treasures worthless toys,
While we possess a Saviour's love."

"We will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well." We heard a lot about wells this afternoon: living water, wells which had been stopped (Genesis 26). These are different wells; these are the wells of the world. We will not drink of them. I take it that the reason why Israel did not want to drink of these wells of the Amorites was because they had water from the smitten rock. And they did not want to eat of the vineyards because they had manna from heaven. They had something better; we have something better. And if your religion and mine is real, beloved friends, we shall be well taught that the best this world can give, even the wells of this world, are only "broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Now you know that, some of you, don't you? The Lord has taught you that, that the pleasures, the possessions, the ambitions, the honours of the world – "broken cisterns, that can hold no water." It is not really water that satisfies; it is cistern water, not fresh, springing water, and even that, there is not much of it because the cisterns are broken, and the water fast running out.

But Israel had water from the smitten rock. “Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it.” A wonderful blessing (wasn’t it?) that Israel had all through the wilderness? – the smitten rock. When Moses smote the rock in Horeb, the water gushed out like a river (Psa. 105. 41), and it followed them wherever they went. And O to see it by faith at Calvary in the Person and work of the Saviour, when He was “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” And see those streams of living water which flow from eternal love, and which flow from the cross of Christ. They bring every blessing that the Israel of God can ever need, every blessing which longing, thirsting souls can ever need:

“Pardon and grace, and boundless love,
Streaming along a Saviour’s blood;
And life, and joy, and crowns above,
Obtained by a dear bleeding God.”

You know, when the Lord first dealt with us we were brought away from the wells of the Amorites, and the fields and the vineyards, and we found something better, and we do not want to go back. But Satan will always tempt you to turn aside to the right hand or to the left. The secret of it all is “looking unto Jesus.” Israel had the cloudy, fiery pillar going before them; we have a risen Saviour going before us. And it is “to keep our eyes on Jesus fixed,” to be looking to Him in dependence and in hope. Then we can say this to the world: “Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king’s high way.”

And what a witness that is to the world! I thought about how beautifully John Bunyan opens it up in *Pilgrim’s Progress* when the pilgrims came to Vanity Fair. They *had* to pass through it, and it was enemy territory. They jeered at them; they wanted them to buy their goods. They scornfully asked them, was there nothing that they would ever buy? And Christian said, Yes, we “buy the truth and sell it not.” But they desired not to look to the right hand or the left hand; they did not want to partake of anything in Vanity Fair, but to go straight through it because of necessity they must go through it. But you remember that Faithful was taken and he was martyred; he was burnt, and he was taken up to heaven. But when Christian went on his way there were a few more, even from Vanity Fair, who set out on pilgrimage with him. You see, that witness. Now when the church of God has compromised with the world, its witness has been weakened and it has never done any good. But when it has walked in singleness of eye for the honour and glory of God, seeking that in all things the Saviour might have the pre-eminence, then those are the times when there has been the blessing.

And I have thought also of that incident in that lovely book *The Life of John Kershaw*. You remember in Rochdale when he was a boy, he

was very torn about, his conscience pricked him; and yet he was fighting, still trying to go the way of the world. It was the time of the Whitsun Fair and the races; and there was a wild crowd all around. John Kershaw was tempted, and he was joining in with the crowd. But, I think it was at the Independent chapel they were having Association Meetings. And he said, amidst it all as he was seeking to drown his concerns in earthly pleasure, he saw two boys of his own age dressed in their Sunday best carrying their Bibles under their arms, and they walked right through the mad crowd and did not even look to the right hand or the left hand. And John Kershaw said, really it was one of the most beautiful things he saw in his life, as if a voice said, "There is Richard and there is Abel and they are going on their way to heaven, and you are going on your way to hell." O the witness of a child of God, sweetly constrained by the love of Christ, walking in living and loving obedience to Him along "the King's highway" that leads to heaven.

"Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king's high way, until we be past thy borders." Now none of us yet have reached past the borders of this world, the world that lies in the wicked one. We still seek to walk along the "King's highway." Sometimes we seem to struggle along, to halt along, but we are not yet past the world's borders. One day we shall be, and until then, what is it? – hiding beneath the shadow of the Almighty, looking to the Lord Jesus in hope, in dependence, praying our way along. Now what is it? It is a way of safety. And not a single one that the Lord puts in the pilgrim way has ever yet perished, and none ever will. There is a beautiful word in the Psalms: "He led them on safely." There is safety in "the King's highway."

"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."

The blessed truth of the everlasting security of the people of God.

"*Until* we be past thy borders." You see, at one time David was struggling along "the King's highway," he was harassed on every side, and this is what he said: "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."

"*Until* we be past thy borders." Beloved friends, this is the posture, this is the attitude of the pilgrim people of God as led forth by the Spirit of God, constrained by love. They seek to follow their Saviour who has gone before in "the King's highway" that leads to heaven.

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY

*Report of the Annual Meetings of the Gospel Standard
Aid and Poor Relief Society held on Friday, April 17th, 2009,
at Clifton, Bedfordshire*

For the second year the Meetings were held in the village of Clifton, and it is thought there were 400 people present in the evening. The Clifton friends helped wonderfully once again in the arrangements for the day. May the Lord be glorified.

PRAYER MEETING

Mr. R.W. Woodhams (Pastor, Rotherfield) read Jeremiah chapter 3 verses 6-14, and spoke as follows:

As I come here this morning, the word in particular that I wish to draw your attention to is the twelfth verse: "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return." When a person is dying in hospital or at home, the phrase is sometimes used: "they are in rapid decline." And as we have come to these meetings year after year, much has been said about our low state and our sinful nation, and sometimes it has been our denomination. But friends, the truth is that we are in rapid decline, and therefore we are a dying people as such, and why is it? Surely it is because not only the world sin, but we sin also. We find that Satan is using so many things in a modern way to find the back door into our homes and to adulterate our hearts and minds in things that are not good. We may spend so much time on things that are not relevant to salvation; in other words, we live as if we shall never die. One can only feel, surely, that God's anger is kindled against us, collectively as a people, as a nation, yea and individually.

And so the broad picture of our reading this morning was this: that Israel had done just that – sinned against the Lord, despite warning after warning; like we have had – warning after warning. God's judgment finally came and Israel was moved into the land of Babylon, and her sister, Judah, who had some godly kings and a godly influence within the land, did not give heed to it, but she observed it, and continued to follow in the same way as her treacherous sister. Yes, for we read that solemn word in verse 10: "And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord." I say, what a solemn thing this is! We know these things are so and yet we pursue the same way and "feignedly, saith the Lord" – pretending that we are repentant, pretending we are changing, but knowing full well we are on that slippery slope to destruction.

So the prophet is directed: "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will

not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.” Just a word here. Why should we think that the Lord will deal differently with us compared to how He dealt with Israel and Judah? God is an unchanging God. He is holy. He is longsuffering and merciful; but surely the time will come in His own way and time, if we continue as we are.

I say, surely the word “Return” must be foremost in our hearts and minds this morning. You might say to me, “But to whom have we got to return? Return to the men who founded our denomination?” Well yes, in some ways, but no – to return to those things that they returned to, to return to the holy Word of God. That is where we have got to return, to what the holy Word of God has said. So often I hear it said, “O but everybody is doing it now. You do not take any notice of that!” But my friends, if God’s Word does not allow it, and speaks against it, yes then, He speaks against it still. And you and I have no right to say, “But we do not know what is in the Word of God.” Do you read the Word of God? The Word of God, I say, is for us to read, and it speaks of you, it speaks of me. It gives warnings to you and me.

Eternity is coming upon us when surely we must give an account of every deed done in the body. How merciful the Lord is here in saying, “Return”! My friends, we might say in our heart, “O that is something that was done of old. It does not apply today.” Tell me anywhere in the Word of God that you can find that does not apply today. One thing I read in the Word of God, and I hope you will too: “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” O may God then in His mercy help us to return. Return, I say, in our ministry, return in the diaconate, return in the churches and congregations, return to the Word of God, and all that He has laid down there how we should walk. *Returning unto Jesus!* O He, Who alone can help us and provide for our every need.

Very quickly in closing my address, I must say this: “For I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.” God is merciful. O I say, in returning, God is merciful. Jesus shows that to us, yes in that wonderful parable of the prodigal son. When he returned his dear father showed mercy upon him. God is merciful still. Jesus is merciful still. It is of His nature. O may we then find that love in our hearts to Him by the power of the Holy Spirit to turn from the world, to follow the words of Jesus in every detail. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” Amen.

Hymns 807, 392 and 858 were sung during the prayer meeting. The following prayed: Mr. J.F. Ashby (Pastor, East Peckham), Mr. S. Mercer (Pastor, Eastbourne), Mr. M.O. Wiltshire (Studley), Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom (Pastor, Luton, Bethel), Mr. B. Burgess (Staplehurst),

Mr. R.J. Bradstock (Pastor, Handcross), Mr. D.J Broome (Trowbridge). Mr. Woodhams closed with prayer and the benediction.

AFTERNOON MEETING

After the singing of hymn 1139, the Chairman of the Society, Mr. G.D. Buss, called on Mr. R.D.G. Field (Pastor, The Dicker) to seek the Lord's blessing on the meeting.

The Chairman then read Joshua chapter 4, verse 14 to the end of the chapter.

CHAIRMAN: The children of Israel were a separated people and throughout their history it was the will of God that they should remember the distinction that God had made between them as a nation and the other nations that were round about them. They were bidden to remember the goodness of God to them as a nation and to remember the foundation upon which God had built them as a people. That is why God anticipated this question which would be asked by their children in days to come, "What mean these stones?" (verse 21). As they looked on those stones, they were to remember the wonderful way in which God had separated them, first in the life of Abraham, and then from Egypt, and then at last He had given them the Promised Land for their possession.

This question came to one's mind: "What mean these stones?" It is perhaps an apposite time to remind ourselves as to the way in which God has been pleased in past generations to bless our particular group of churches by remembering the stones upon which this little group of churches was built. If we forget these things, then we are in the danger of which the Proverbs warns, that of removing the ancient landmarks. In our day there is a danger that we forget what our forefathers used to call "our distinctive position." Now I do not say that in a proud way. God forbid we should do that! We have nothing to be proud of but there is, and there should be, a distinctive position of our churches.

There are five things I just want to bring before you, rather like David with five stones in his sling. These five things have characterized the churches that we know and love in their best days. In the spirit of this morning's address we seek God's help to return to these foundation truths.

The first one is that the churches we know and love believe and should not be ashamed of being Particular Baptists; that is, we believe in particular redemption. We believe that God the Father gave to the Son a people to redeem. They covenanted together that they would be redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. This people, every one of them without exception, will be quickened into divine life while here on earth and made ready for glory. We believe in particular redemption. This stone must not be removed. May God help us to defend it.

Secondly, our little group of churches was especially distinct in the controversy many, many years ago concerning the Person of Christ, the eternal Sonship. Men like good J.C. Philpot, William Gadsby, John Kershaw and John Warburton and other stalwarts in the faith were raised up by God to stand for the truth at a time when the very heart of the denomination was in danger of being torn out. Let us never compromise with the Person of Christ. He is the eternal Son of the eternal Father. He ever has been, He ever will be, and He is the same today as yesterday, as He will be for ever. Also, we believe that in the fulness of time He took into union with His divine Person another nature, a human nature, body and soul, so He is both verily God and He is also verily Man. These things we must contend for. The Word of God tells us most clearly, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." Let us never compromise on either His divinity or His humanity. He is one Person with two natures.

"He is what He has been and ever will be,
He became what He was not for sinners like me."

Thirdly, we as a group of churches believe that the gospel is to be preached but not offered to sinners. I do not wish to be contentious this afternoon but nowhere in the Word of God do we read of the word "offering" the gospel. We read of the one offering made by a precious Christ on behalf of sinners, blessed offering, sweet offering, the sweet savour that perfumes heaven itself this very afternoon hour and is the acceptance for the prayers of God's dear people. God's servants are called to preach and proclaim the gospel to every creature; to proclaim the truth of sin and salvation, the law and the gospel. Yes, and that God has a people and that people will be saved with an everlasting salvation. We are called to preach it, to proclaim it. Let us not slip into a semi-Arminian position. The Word of God is very clear, we are to preach the gospel, preach the Word.

Fourthly, many years ago, our dear friend, Mr. Clement Wood, was preaching at Chippenham Anniversary. One sentence of his sermon is still remembered. He said that we, as a group of churches, stand for application. That is, we believe if the Word of God is to be made spirit and life to our souls, the Holy Ghost must take that Word, and write it in our hearts. So it is not head knowledge; not opinions. It is not speculation. It is not theory. It is not just theology. It is nothing short of revelation by the application of the Word by the Holy Ghost. We must contend for a religion that is more than notion. We must contend for that, otherwise we will be like Ignorance when he came to the Celestial City gate, a very religious man, a very talkative man as well, a man who had apparently made very quick headway in his profession.

But when asked for his certificate, he had none. He had never had application; he had never had revelation; he had nothing personal. Our churches – and I do not say it proudly – have sought to stand for that. Let us not compromise on it. It is absolutely essential.

Finally, we believe the gospel is our rule of life. There have been many contentions over whether the law should be our rule of life or not. Friends, when good William Gadsby took up that point, in no way was he discounting any of the moral commands in the Ten Commandments. The dear man loved the law in that respect. But he believed, and the Word of God teaches us, that the gospel is a higher standard, but also, it is a better standard, and what is more, whereas the law and the legal gospel is, “Do and live,” the gospel of grace is, “Live and do.” And that is the foundation of how we believe the gospel to be our rule of life.

In William Gadsby’s day there were those who were critical of him and his doctrine. But others of those who looked on said to them, “Well look at his people. Do they seem worldly? Are they joined to the world? Are they a people who are walking loosely their profession?” And these critics who were very opposed to William Gadsby’s doctrine said, “No, there is no more godly, separated people than William Gadsby’s congregation in the whole of Manchester.”

I tell you, dear friends, if the gospel really is our rule of life, we will be separated from inward sin and this world without. We will not be ashamed of the gospel nor will we wish to compromise it. But let us not slip back into a legal gospel, for there is no such thing. Paul said, “If I, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel ... let him be accursed.” O friends, we want the life of God in our heart, bringing forth fruits unto salvation.

Now, we were exhorted this morning to return. May we, by God’s grace return to these foundation truths which He so wonderfully blessed among us as a group of churches. There is a little remnant that still loves them. I believe many of you here can say this is what you love. Well, may the Lord teach us not to compromise, not to cast away our heritage, but to strengthen those things that remain. May God add His blessing to those few remarks.

The Chairman then welcomed the friends to the Annual General Meeting of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society, and then asked the Secretary, Mr. Mercer, to introduce the Annual Reports and Accounts for 2008. The published Report was not read. Copies can be obtained from the Secretary.

MR. MERCER: Mr. Chairman and dear friends: It is good to see such a large gathering of subscribers and friends here today and our thanks go to Mr. Lawson and his team of helpers who have again provided us with all of the facilities for the Annual General Meeting. There were many expressions of satisfaction with the location and facilities for the meeting last year, and it is

generally felt that our friends favour holding the annual meeting in one of our own chapels.

The Lord has been pleased to help us each through another year since we last met on this occasion and we would humbly record our heartfelt thanksgiving for the mercy that we have received. We live in most solemn days and since we last met on this annual occasion, things that never could have been anticipated have taken place. The situation in the world is very solemn and it is clear that the Lord's judgments are upon us internationally and particularly in our own country.

The Committee is burdened by both denominational and temporal anxieties and, in particular, the low state of our churches to which attention has been drawn by our Editor in the *Gospel Standard*. As mentioned on previous occasions, there is a most solemn falling away amongst us and a spirit of carnal ease and satisfaction with light things has entered in. This is recognised, but is the cause acknowledged? It is not accepted by many that the reason is our own sins, our carnality and our unwillingness to walk according to our profession. These issues are very serious and many of our young people cannot reconcile the things that are done with what we profess. This causes many questions to arise in their minds about the reality of our religion and gives rise to confusion when they see things that they cannot reconcile.

The Committee, knowing its responsibilities and acknowledging that it has no authority over the churches, would prayerfully exhort to a personal examination of our ways and to a desire for greater adherence to the truth in practice. The responsibilities of the Committee are to maintain a list of our churches who unreservedly hold our doctrinal position and observe our church order, and also to administer the funds of the Society as laid down in the Charity Commission scheme of October 15th, 2007. A statement of the trustees' responsibilities is set out on page 8 of the report. The Committee must also observe and comply with current regulations relating to charities. The power of the Charity Commission increases as more regulations come into effect and all charities have to show that they are acting for the public interest and state quite clearly what their policies are on a number of issues. These stated policies are under review by the Committee and will be redefined during the present year. References to public benefit will be required throughout the trustees' report for 2009, whereas in compliance with current SORP requirements, specific reference is made in a paragraph of the trustees' report for 2008. The new guidance was issued by the Charity Commission in November 2008.

The present economic situation is affecting us all. It is very apparent in our Societies, in our churches and personally. We fear that the true depth of the financial crisis has not been revealed to us by the Government, and what lies before us as a nation only the Lord knows. Men claim to be in control and make bold statements about recovery, but they do not acknowledge the hand of God in what has befallen us. Prophecy is being fulfilled and there are many signs that we are in the last days. Perilous times have come. May it be our chief concern to be made ready for eternity whenever the call shall come for us to leave this time state.

The financial position of the Society is strong because it has very considerable reserves. These have been increased by the substantial legacy from the estate of Mr. R.W. Shelton, deceased. The Committee has decided that, despite the present economic situation, the grants that are paid will not in the

immediate future be reduced because our reserves will be used to continue to further the objects of the Society. The needs of our friends may well become more pressing and doubtless there are others who do not benefit at the present time who will find financial help very acceptable. Any subscriber is welcome to bring to the Committee's attention a needy case, which will be looked into by the Secretary.

During the year the funds increased by £314,358, taking into account the legacy receivable of £260,000, and they now total £2,700,526. The Aid and Poor Relief Society funds increased by £303,170, the Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund increased by £1,604 and the Magazine Fund by £9,584. Over half of the Magazine Fund increase was due to an anonymous donation of £5,000 during the year.

Grants paid amounted to £75,041 and included an additional payment totalling £2,900 made to twenty-nine beneficiaries to help with the increased cost of heating during the winter months. Two ministers received funds to help with the replacement cost of their cars totalling £7,500. The Committee is always dependent upon those to whom grants are paid to notify the Secretary of any changed circumstances so that any adjustment that is necessary to the amount of the grant can be made.

The Committee seeks at all times to act prudently and to seek wisdom in the dispersal of grants. The income for the present year arising from investments will be substantially lower than in 2008, and to give an example of the reduction, during the three months to March 31st, 2008, bank interest of £26,206 was received by the Aid and Poor Relief Society, compared with £5,311 in the three months to March 31st, 2009. This is a reduction of £20,895 or 79% of last year's income.

The Magazine Fund continues to be supported by some of our chapels, who take collections for the benefit of that Fund, and by numerous donations by magazine subscribers, and the Committee is very grateful for this regular support. In view of the surplus that is generated in the Magazine Fund, the magazine subsidy that has been paid by the Gospel Standard Trust will not be received this year, but the Trust Committee has said that if the need arose, it would consider helping the Magazine Fund again. Each year in July the Committee determine the cost of the *Gospel Standard* and *Friendly Companion* for the following calendar year, and it is difficult to assess what currency fluctuations there will be between the American dollar and sterling and the Euro and sterling. The financial markets have been in great turmoil, and the Committee needs to be given much wisdom in deciding the price of the magazines because a small error can give rise to quite a large difference when this is multiplied by the number of magazines that are sent out.

The first issue of the new magazine *Perception* has been subscribed for and was dispatched in March. It has been well received and the Committee trusts that it will be profitable to our younger friends. The subscribers represent a cross section of our magazine readers, both younger and older, and in excess of 350 copies have been sent out.

We are thankful for the continuing gracious help that is given to the magazine editors. It is a continuing burden to publish profitable material and this is a constant exercise month after month. The Committee prays that each of the editors will be given all needed grace and wisdom in their respective responsibilities.

When any particular issue arises affecting morality or Christian liberties, letters are written to the respective cabinet minister or Church of England leader stating our position on these issues and pointing out the scriptural instruction applicable. The response is usually very disappointing or none is received.

Mr. J.E. Rutt has arranged, if the Lord will, to preach at Choteau and the two chapels in Canada during May, and Mr. Robert Field expects to travel to the United States on June 2nd, to preach at Grand Rapids and Sheboygan, spending a week at each place. In October Mr. T.J. Rosier is expected, if the Lord will, to travel to Canada to preach for two weeks in both Nobleford and Chilliwack. We seek that the Lord will bless the ministry of the Word. We remember the three ministers in the United States and seek that the Lord would be gracious in helping them, owning and blessing the preached Word. We also remember Mr. Seymour in Australia, who labours amongst the few there, and desire the Lord's blessing upon him.

We seek that all of our ministers, as they labour on the walls of Zion, will be granted that fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit whereby they are enabled to preach a full gospel and that the Lord would bless the Word abundantly to those who sit under the sound of the truth. May there yet be many born again of the Spirit and an establishing of God-fearing souls in the truth. All of our ministers realise their complete dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit to apply the Word to the hearts of the hearers, and may there be many who gather in our various causes of truth who truly hunger and thirst for Christ. The Lord has promised to satisfy the longing soul and to fill the hungry with good things. May there be that true hunger and thirst after righteousness in each of us.

The Committee seeks your prayers in these very solemn and difficult days that it may be enabled faithfully to discharge the responsibilities that rest upon it. May the Lord be pleased to hear our prayers and lengthen out His longsuffering toward us. We are thankful that as a group of churches we are not completely without some evidences of the Lord's favour but He has said, "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you."

The Chairman thanked Mr. Mercer and asked for any questions relating to the Annual Report and Accounts.

Mr. David Goodge (Lakenheath) asked a few questions and made a few comments on the way the Committee is elected. The Chairman answered, giving reasons why our procedure is satisfactory. Full details are available on request to the Secretary.

As there were no more questions, the proposal to approve and adopt the Annual Report and Accounts was put to the meeting. It was proposed by Mr. Peter Barnard (East Peckham) and seconded by Mr. K.M. Price (Pastor, Kendal) and carried *nem com*.

The Chairman then warmly thanked Mr. Mercer for all he had done as Secretary over the last year. He then asked Mr. Mercer to declare the result of the election of the three members who were put up for re-election. 247 ballot papers were sent out, of which 195 were returned. Each of the three members of the Committee that offered themselves for re-election, Mr. Izzard, Mr. Kerley and Mr. Woodhams, received in excess of 90% of the votes cast and therefore they are now re-elected for three years.

The Chairman thanked all those who had responded to the election by voting and asked Mr. D.W. Kerley to respond on the behalf of those who had been re-elected.

MR. KERLEY: Dear friends, we thank you for your vote and we do desire in the Committee to do all things in the fear of the Lord and for the good of our churches and for the needy ones among them. And we do ask that you will give us your prayers. You do not know, perhaps, how some of us go up to those meetings in fear and weakness and we are poor sinners, fallible creatures, but if the Spirit of Christ reigns in our meetings, then all will be done for His honour and His glory. Brethren, pray for us. Thank you.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Kerley and endorsed what had been said, by stating that the Committee values the much-needed prayers of friends even more than their votes.

The Chairman then reported greetings received from each of the overseas churches and ministers.

He then read the following statement from the Gospel Standard Baptist Library.

“The Gospel Standard Library is probably the smallest of the charities connected with the Gospel Standard and is supported almost entirely by voluntary contributions, although there is a small income from the sale of second hand books. It is a wonderful collection of well over 10,000 books plus pamphlets and booklets of good, sound literature, particularly of the Puritan, Reformed and Calvinistic position. It also includes books of interest connected with the Bible – travel, geography, natural history, customs, etc., and also a children’s section. There is a wealth of information here for study and research, including family histories and home schooling, as well as much profitable reading for personal use. This is facilitated by a variety of indices and also the use of photocopying and scanning. The trustees and librarians would be pleased if it were more widely used.

“There is also the financial position which causes some concern since with rising costs the Library was in deficit this year and there is very little by way of reserves. There are only three people who give a regular annual donation and it would be very much appreciated if there could be more support in this way, although it need not be a regular commitment, and any donations are appreciated. Gift aid forms are available. Our librarians freely give their time and are always pleased to assist in any way that they can.”

The Chairman then made brief mention of the Gospel Standard Trust Annual General Meeting to be held, God willing, on May 16th, at Clifton when Mr. Ramsbottom is expected to give an address entitled, “The distress that we are in – God’s answer in the Book of Nehemiah.”

He further mentioned the book on John Calvin by Mr. J.R. Broome which has been republished by the Gospel Standard Trust to mark the 500th anniversary of the birth of the Reformer.

The Chairman also endorsed the Secretary’s call for more subscribers and mentioned that churches are welcome to recommend ministers for the Gospel Standard list whose ministry is in the power of the Holy Ghost and commended to the heart of the hearers. It is for the churches to make the first move in that matter.

In closing the meeting the Chairman extended on behalf of the assembled company prayerful and loving good wishes to Mr. Ramsbottom, our Editor, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday which he hoped to celebrate the next day.

Hymn 516 was then sung.

The 2nd Meeting of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund then followed (see later).

After hymn 684 was sung, Mr. B.E. Izzard (Pastor, Fenstanton) addressed the Meeting.

Mr. Izzard read Genesis chapter 26, verse 17 to 25 (on Isaac digging wells, and the Philistines stopping up wells). He then spoke as follows.

It is my prayerful desire that a few comments that we may be able to say will bind us together, that the truth might be precious and Christ exalted.

Firstly, in these verses we notice the works of men, devils, indeed our wicked hearts; then the works of faith and briefly Christ the Object of faith. We have read of the wells being filled, the work of the Philistines. It is very clearly, friends, a day when the wells are being filled in. It is the work of Satan, and we have noticed it in the comments that have been made (in the Bethesda Report) and the hymn we have sung earlier:

“Though men, sin, and devils unite
To drive the believer to hell,
Jehovah will put them to flight,
And Zion shall surely prevail.”

May it be so. It is a day when the wells of truth are being filled with earth. Solemn days, unprecedented days! The works of Satan, as we have been reminded, are on every hand. It is a day when we can surely say that the wells of truth, morality, godliness and the Word of God are filled in and trodden under foot in every way we look. It is in our land.

Further we notice the need of the Lord to grant to us true repentance in our own hearts. The servants of Isaac digged again the wells, which Abraham had digged, which were filled. May the Lord help us to consider this glorious truth, that the Lord touches the hearts of those He calls by grace to know the same blessed truths and to seek “earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

We shall not dwell long upon the first part of our comments, but we notice especially the state of our nation: the humanism, the atheism, agnosticism and the dreadful day in which we live. Is not God’s chariot hastening on? How solemn the days! Yet we believe that God still has a remnant of humble souls; I want to be among them – touched by the finger of God, sought out of the ways of sin, death and ruin by God’s invincible grace.

I want to speak to those that may be exercised in the things of God. May the faith of God be given to them to continue in the same truths. That is the remedy for the solemn state of our nation, the churches and especially ourselves, by God-given faith, to dig again those wells where there is that living water of which we have sung.

Vital things are before us. May God direct us. There is one group of people I want to remember in my thoughts this afternoon, and that is the parents, and grandparents too, and those that have nephews and nieces. What a solemn day it is! We bear them up before the throne of God although there be such a decay. May the Spirit of God be given that God may bless our offspring. May He apply His truth into their hearts and encourage those that would seek to instruct the children and to lay before them constantly the truth. Our dear friend this morning in prayer made the comment that the very nauseating days in which we live may be in the hand of God to stir up those whose hearts God has touched – to dig again those wells, and seek for that living water. Satan overstretchers himself. May God appear. How solemn is the day in which we live! Much could be said of the solemn state of our land. May we be really concerned and exercised before God. May the Lord appear.

I want to mention very quickly something that lies on my heart: that as a group of churches we may be brought again unto these living waters, these precious truths. Our godly forefathers were taught of God, and they were taught of God to seek for that living water. You know, the dear saints of God (as we have sung) were sick of cistern waters. They could not be satisfied without the living spring, the water of divine life. What truths we have sung! It is by the gift of living faith that those that are quickened by God's grace want the same truth, the same gospel that humbles men in the dust and graciously exalts the Saviour.

Many, many years ago I was with my late father-in-law at a place in Sussex where he was trying to find an old farmhouse where he stayed many years before. But all was desolation. Brambles were all about, and there was a pile of bricks. He said, "There was a well somewhere here." All that was left was a pile of bricks. The bricks had been put down the well, friends. A lively illustration of the solemn state of our nation before God! Everyone seems to bow down to the god of this world, and compromise.

God grant those that shall be thirsty enough, to seek for these living waters. We sing in the hymn the very truth of it:

"A spring that issues from a rock, (this is what I like)
Where purest waters flow;
And rocky hearts, by Moses struck,
May to these waters go."

Nothing less will do. We need the Lord to grant to us these living waters. Therein is repentance. Therein is all poor Zion needs.

Are there those that God is graciously bringing by His Spirit to maintain these ancient landmarks, the truths of the gospel, having tasted the truth of law and gospel, and “to these waters go”? O how we must speak faithfully, friends. It is a time of decay, of filling in. May the Lord grant in many hearts that desire for God’s honour and glory, whatever it may cost. It is Christ only (isn’t it?) with those that are taught by the blessed Spirit.

I believe that when God sends a man to preach, he is then able to dig again these wells. Without the Spirit of God, all we do is, solemnly, fill in the wells. Friends, we need the springing up of that living water. We need the truth as it is in Jesus. It may seem a little severe but we must maintain the vital truth that the Lord only can heal the wounds of sin. Are there those that the Lord speaks to? “Who is there among you of all His people? His God be with him and let him go up.” It is preaching the same blessed truths, the same glorious Christ-exalting precious truths that do bring that life divine.

We think much of that account of Christ and the woman of Samaria, and Jesus weary with His journey. And I think in the truth of the gospel that she was sweetly brought to believe in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. “She left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” Now Christ is that sweet well, isn’t He? Dear Rutherford said,

“O Christ He is the Fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I’ve tasted
More deep I’ll drink above.
There to an ocean fulness
His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel’s land.”

Friends, we need that glorious gospel of Christ. You know, that well that we speak of is the well of God’s everlasting love, that well of covenant love. O what glorious truths are in that covenant, that love of God that “breaks forth in boundless seas of grace”! Do you need that, friends, for your poor, sin-sick soul? And there is none that have got more unbelief, I truly believe, than I. There is only one thing will do, and that is the fulness of God’s eternal love to sinners. We sang something of it in that beautiful hymn,

“No spring will quench a thirst like this;
It makes a conscience whole,

Inspires the heart with heavenly bliss,
And purifies the soul.

“Whoe’er can truly say, ‘I thirst,’
May come and take his fill; (that is the gospel)
’Tis free for sinners, vile and lost;
’Tis God who works the will.”

Is it not all of sovereign grace?

I do want to notice before I close that beautiful word “Rehoboth” (verse 22), and that well that was so named. Now that to my mind is most precious. That is the essence of God’s covenant love, the essence of the gospel: it makes room for poor, needy sinners. Not because of their prayers, not for their goodness nor even their repentance, but friends, it is that glorious truth of a fulness. The Father hath made room in the Person of His Son. “A fulness resides in Jesus our Head.” We think of those older ones that need the Lord to help them to believe. What we long for them, and for ourselves too, is the application of divine truth of that well called “Rehoboth; and he said, For the Lord hath made room for us.” Now that is just what poor sinners need. Those that would believe, those that desire to come but fear that they will not be accepted, or their sins are too great. Friends, the Lord show you and me that place and that well where God has made room for poor sinners in covenant love.

You know a well is ever replenished (isn’t it?) when we think of it in the simplicity of it. Those that draw at the well do not look down into the well to see if they can see the water. They let down their vessel into it, don’t they? Perhaps they have to let it down a long way. Where the water is, the empty vessel is filled. So it is in the gospel, the poor empty vessel is filled but we cannot tell how. It is from the fulness.

Now God grant us that living faith in a precious Christ. No, it is not fanciful. Friends, such is our state by nature, we need the Lord deeply to convince us of our native sin and to lay us low, and then lower still. And then to reveal to us something of the preciousness of Jesus Christ in all His excellency, the sweetness of Jesus’ saving name. Then we shall put our hands to our mouth and truly acknowledge our sins as never before. May the Lord grant a little of the springing up of this well. “Spring up O well! be this my theme, Thou water sweet from Bethlehem.” That is a beautiful hymn we sometimes sing:

“How welcome to the soul oppressed,
In sorrow’s vale, by raging thirst,
Scorched by the sun’s meridian beam,
Is the sweet well of Bethlehem!”

One verse I love especially:

“Wide as the stretch of human woe,
Those death-consuming waters flow;
Spring up, O well! be this my theme,
Thou water sweet from Bethlehem.”

How excellent is the truth of it! We need the Lord to bring us again, friends, upon the same glorious truths. The dear saints of old had to endure many things for the sincere milk of the Word and the strong meat of the gospel. They knew what they wanted; they had to leave many things behind. May God revive His work in the midst of our days. May the Lord graciously appear, that is the burden of many hearts, and may a few things this afternoon unite us together although we live in such perilous times. “For who can tell?”

Hymn 500 was sung, and the Meeting closed with prayer by the Chairman.

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

2nd ANNUAL MEETING

MR. HENRY MERCER (Chairman, Bethesda Fund): It is my privilege and pleasure to welcome to this the 2nd Annual General Meeting of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund many of our subscribers and friends. Bethesda has been maintained through another year and we record the mercies of our God to us. The purpose for which the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund was set up over sixty years ago has been continued, and we have been helped to provide care and attention for our aged residents. Whenever possible our residents are cared for until their end, and we are thankful for the devotion of our managers and our staff.

The published Report of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund was not read. Copies can be obtained from the General Secretary (for address, see page xii).

The Bethesda Secretary, Mr. T.H.W. Scott, spoke as follows:

MR. SCOTT: Mr. Chairman, subscribers and dear friends: My first duty is to present to you the annual accounts for the year 2008. The principal accounting statement is the Statement of Financial Activities, normally known as the SOFA, and this can be found on page 32 of the Report. The year ended with a deficit of £37,929, which is the figure found in brackets towards the bottom of the page in the fourth column. In the end column are the comparative figures for 2007 but these are exceptional figures due to the sale of the Tunbridge Wells Home in that year.

The main points to note this year are, first, the much lower amount received by way of legacies, £32,310 in 2008 compared with £293,629 in 2007. However, this source of income is very erratic and we never know what may happen in a particular year. Investment income was considerably higher than the previous year mainly due to larger sums on deposit. However, there is no doubt that

during the current year 2009 investment income will be much less as a result of the rapidly-falling interest rates. At the beginning of 2008 the average rate of interest being received on our deposits was 5.8%, but by February of this year the rate paid on one of our deposits had fallen as low as 0.69%. In view of the instability in the financial world, the Committee decided to commission a review of the three major investments, feeling that in the present times the security of capital was more important than income, and this review was carried out by Mazars Financial Planning. The conclusion of the review was that the three institutions in which our funds are deposited were as secure as any could be in the present situation, and so no action was taken following the review.

Voluntary contributions, that is donations, subscriptions and chapel collections, were lower than the previous year, mainly because in 2007 there were a number of one-off gift aid donations. The amount received from chapel collections is about the same as the previous year, and we do thank all the chapels who have held collections for Bethesda during the year, about 45 of our chapels, I believe.

A summary of the financial results for each of the Homes is given on page 14 and of the Flatlets on page 16. Each of the Homes has operated at a loss, but costs have continued to rise quite sharply, many of them beyond our control. For example, since 2005 the cost of power, that is electricity and gas supplied to the Homes, has risen by 60%, something, of course, we are all experiencing in our own homes.

The Committee has decided that from the beginning of April the Bethesda fee is to rise by 7½% which will bring the basic fee up from £427 to £458 per week and residents with higher care needs up to £526. I did comment in the Annual Report on the recently published Report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which concluded that the fair market fee for operating a modern, efficient care home outside of London was £538. We like to think, then, that although our fees have increased considerably, they are still at a lower rate than many similar establishments. Subsidies paid to residents unable to get state funding, or at least sufficient funding, have increased from £50,000 to £58,000 and this upward trend appears set to continue. We are pleased that our sister charity, The Piggott Charity, has been able to pay a grant amounting to £5,800 to help underfunded residents, and we thank the three chapels who made donations to that charity and also an anonymous donor during the year.

At the beginning of the year budgets are set for each of the Homes, and we do try hard to keep within those budgets. However, it is often difficult to estimate repairs and maintenance to the properties, if something unplanned for happens as it frequently does, and items such as laundry equipment often require extensive repairs or a decision has to be made whether to repair or replace. Both Brighton and Harpenden are showing their age and even Studley, although a much more modern Home, is having to undergo work to items like the electrical installation, which no longer meets modern standards.

Reference is made in the Annual Report to the ways in which we have tried to improve Bethesda properties so I do not need to comment further on that. This year, in 2009, early in the new year, we began work on alterations to the dining room at the Harpenden Home to provide more space. The dining room has never been quite sufficient to meet the needs of the Home, and the alterations should enable at least eight more people to be seated, and there will be more room for

wheelchairs and zimmer frames. At the same time a new medical store and freezer room have been provided. We are grateful to one chapel that agreed to hold a collection towards the cost of fitting out the medical store. This includes the provision for the storage of controlled drugs, which have to be kept under double lock and key.

Turning now from the Accounts to other matters I would like briefly to comment on. First, many of us have been very disturbed by the recent actions of the Brighton and Hove City Council when funding of £13,000 was withdrawn from Pilgrim Homes after the Council had accused them of “institutional homophobia.” This was funding that had been used to finance the cost of a warden, and the withdrawal of funding followed the refusal of Pilgrim Homes to comply with demands that they should ask their residents every three months concerning their sexual orientation. There was also a request that they should use elderly homosexual people in their published leaflets. Although Pilgrim Homes attempted to resolve the issue with the Council, it was not until the Council was told that legal action would be taken against it for religious discrimination that the Council agreed to withdraw its accusation and to restore the funding. The case was backed financially by the Christian Institute. Although we are thankful that the outcome was successful, it does show the contempt which some public bodies hold for orthodox Christian beliefs and values. So far there have been no problems at Bethesda, but the threat is real, and we need to be much in prayer that we should be preserved from this godless perspective which is creeping into all aspects of our national life.

The second matter I would mention is concerning our regulatory body, the Commission for Social Care Inspection, known as CSCI. It is only a few years since that body was set up and took over from the National Care Standards Commission, but now the government is introducing a totally new regulatory body. The new regulator will be known as the Care Quality Commission and will bring together the independent regulation of health, mental health and adult social welfare under one body in England for the first time. This month, April, the new body takes over from the CSCI and there will be a transitional year before the system comes fully into operation in April 2010. We have all just got to grips with the National Minimum Standards that were introduced by the present system, but we are told that the new system will differ vastly from the old system and will introduce a new set of quality and safety standards. No doubt there will be a lot of work in implementing these new standards, but there do seem to be some real improvements, particularly those relating to the registration of service providers and registration of Home Managers, and those changes we welcome.

We are pleased to add that under the new star rating system introduced last year for Care Homes across the country, in September the Harpenden Home was upgraded to a 3 star rating, placing it in the “excellent” category.

Speaking of Harpenden, I would remind you that this year is the 40th anniversary of the opening of the Harpenden Home. If the Lord will, we hope to hold an Open Day on the second Saturday in June, that is June 13th, when the Home will be open from 1.45 p.m. and there will be a service of thanksgiving held in the Home at 2.30 p.m. when Mr. Ramsbottom is expected to preach. Tea will be served later in the afternoon. We do hope as many as possible will be able to join with us, but to assist with catering, if you are hoping to come, could you please let the Home know.

The number of subscribers to Bethesda has risen during the year and now stands at 224, and we welcome all new subscribers during the year. Some of our friends say, Well, we already contribute to Bethesda through chapel collections. This, of course, is true and we are thankful for the generosity of so many people who contribute in this way, but the purpose of subscribers is not so much to raise revenue, but rather to have a body of people who tangibly identify with the charity and receive the Annual Report and vote at the Annual Meeting. I do have forms with me today so please ask for one if you would like to become a subscriber. I would particularly encourage our younger friends to become subscribers if they feel led to do so.

So finally we would commend to you this Annual Report and all the work of Bethesda. We live in a day when respect for old age is diminishing and in several places the Word of God does speak of this matter. In Leviticus we read, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man," and that is followed with a reminder, "I am the Lord." The prophet Isaiah in chapter 3 refers to a day when the young shall rise up against the old, not giving them the honour due to them. I feel, therefore, that the compassionate, loving care given in Bethesda is in accordance with the Word of God.

May the Lord continue to be with us in all the future pathway.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Scott for his Report and for all the work he does during the year so consistently and efficiently.

An opportunity was given for questions, but none were asked.

It was proposed by Mr. J.B. Hart (Rotherfield) and seconded by Mr. D.J. Broome (Trowbridge) that the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund for 2008 be approved and adopted. This was carried *nem con*

The Chairman then stated that the retiring members of Committee, Mr. M.G. Bailey, Mr. R.D.G. Field, together with Mr. M.O. Wiltshire, who was appointed since the last Annual General Meeting, had offered themselves for re-election. The Secretary announced that a total of 224 ballot papers were distributed to subscribers of which 179 were returned. There were no spoilt papers, so the number of valid papers was 179. As a result of the voting all three members were re-elected by a substantial majority, two members having received in excess of 95% of the votes cast and one member in excess of 85%. Members require a simple majority to be re-elected.

The Chairman mentioned that at the present time there is no successor in view to take the position of General Secretary. The Committee seeks that the Lord will hear and answer its prayers in this matter. Mr. Scott has indicated that he wishes to retire soon having held the position of General Secretary for almost twenty years. Appreciation was expressed for the prayerful and practical support of our friends and subscribers and for the help of so many volunteers so regularly given.

PRAYING IN FAITH

By William Guthrie (1620-1665)

What is it to pray in faith?

1. To pray in faith is to be endued with saving grace from the Lord. This grace of faith must be infused into the person that approaches unto God. For it is impossible that the person that lacks faith can be acceptable to God – I mean not faith of miracles or an historical faith, but true and justifying faith. This shows that all that are destitute of this grace are in a bad case. “For without faith it is impossible to please God.” And this is the woeful case they are in that want [lack] faith, that never anything they do is acceptable to God; and this again is the noble privilege of those that have it, that all they do in duty is accepted of Him.

2. To pray in faith is not only to have this grace infused into you, but it is to have that grace in exercise in and about the particular petition you would put up to God. Whatsoever thing you ask, you must have faith exercised about that particular, whether it be for soul or body, for yourself or for the church, for spiritual or for temporal things.

3. To pray in faith is to make use of the grounds of faith in our praying, *viz.*, the word of promise, for the promises are the ground of our suit. So that in acceptable prayer faith makes use of this and that promise and turns the promise into a petition. This is faith’s work. It is neither humility nor self-denial that can do this. But faith takes this and the other promise, and holds it up to God, that He may make it out. “Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope.”

4. To pray in faith is to make use of and to employ Christ the Mediator. So that the soul will never go to God but in the Mediator; and it looks for a return to its suits or petitions only in and through the Mediator Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Says He Himself, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do.” That is, “Expect access to the Father in and through My name; look for a return in and through My name.” We pray in faith when in all our addresses we are actually endeavouring to improve [make use of] the merit and mediation of Him who is at the right hand of God the Father.

5. To pray in faith is to pray over all opposition. When, to human appearance, there is nothing but anger and wrath from God, and when the soul is under the apprehensions of His wrath, yet faith will come over all these unto God. When He is inflicting some judgment upon the person, and seems to be angry with the person, then faith goes over all and presses in unto God; that is to pray in faith. For instance, “I cried by reason of my affliction; I said, I am cast out of Thy sight.” Yet what does faith when in sense he is cast out of God’s presence? Faith puts

him upon supplicating God again. "Yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple."

6. To pray in faith is this: when the soul promises to itself on the ground of God's Word an answer to the particular petition it is putting up to God. To pray in faith is not only to know well that the thing you are seeking is warrantable and according to His will, but in some measure to have assurance (or endeavour after it) of an answer in absolute things; that is, if it be absolutely necessary, they believe it shall be granted. As to conditional petitions, they believe that if it be good for them, they shall have what they ask. If they present a petition for those things that are absolutely necessary, whether in respect of themselves or His church, it shall be sure unto them; and if their petition is for things conditional, either to themselves or the church, if it be for their good it shall not be wanting. You see an instance to this purpose in Micah 7. 7. All was then going wrong, yet, says he, "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me"; as if he had said, "What then? I answer myself that God will hear me."

Remember these six things which show what it is to pray in faith.

THE CONSECRATION OF CHRIST

By Robert Traill (1642-1716) on Hebrews 10. 20:

"A new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us."

We find therefore the truth of consecrating, and devoting, and dedicating our Lord Jesus to be the way to heaven. It is frequently in the Word, and used upon many accounts. We will therefore take notice that it is the Father hath dedicated Him to be the way; for this is of great use in the exercise of our faith, to know our Lord Jesus under this name, that He is the consecrated way to heaven.

1. He is consecrated by the oath of God, as in Psalm 110. 4: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." And this the apostle discourses of at great length in Hebrews chapter 7, and makes one of the grand differences betwixt His priesthood and all that went before to consist in this, that they were made without an oath, hinting there was a time when they should cease. But when He made our Lord Jesus a Priest, it was by an oath, which was a demonstration that He was to continue for ever in that employment. Therefore in the conclusion of that chapter he says, "For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

Take in this matter now by a true faith, and it may be that some time or other you will find food for your faith from it, that by the oath and appointment of Jehovah, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Christ the Son is sworn and appointed to be the only way to bring sinners to glory.

2. Our Lord Jesus is dedicated and consecrated to be the way to heaven by the preparing Him a body to suffer in. The covenant betwixt the Father and Son had all the blessings therein secured by the mutual faithfulness betwixt Father and Son; but the way by which these were to be brought about was the sacrifice of the Son in man's nature. Therefore His consecration is carried on by His getting a human body (Heb. 10. 5): "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me." Did not God will and command sacrifices? Yes, but never out of His Son Christ Jesus. These were all but shadows and types of the great one, and there was no such thing required of our Lord Jesus, neither did He offer any such thing; but, "A body," says He, "hast Thou prepared Me."

3. By the commission and charge that our Lord had for the setting about this great work of redemption. He not only had a body to suffer in, but was commanded by the Father to lay down His life for His people. This our Lord frequently takes notice of: "This commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10. 17, 18).

4. He is dedicated by the holy anointing. One of the grand ceremonies of consecrating a person under the Old Testament was by anointing. Aaron was to be anointed and his sons; when they came in to be priests of God's appointment, they were God's anointed. And all this is typical of the true anointing of our Lord Jesus. The anointing of Christ is the fulness of the Holy Ghost and His pouring upon Him: "Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows" (Psa. 45. 7).

5. By giving Him all power over all persons and things in order to the accomplishment of His work. All judgment is committed to Him: "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him" (John 5. 21; Matt. 28. 18; John 17. 2).

A serpent that hath no sting may hiss and affright, but we may take him in our hand without danger. Death poured out all its poison, and lost its sting in Christ's side, when He became a curse for us.

John Flavel

WAS IT FOR ME?

By Robert Traill (1642-1716) on Hebrews 10. 20

But, say you, I do not know that He has been consecrated for me [as the new and living way – Heb. 10. 20]. I know that He is consecrated to be the only way to heaven; but is He consecrated for me? I answer,

1. No man ever did, and no man can, and you never will be able to know that Christ is consecrated for you, till you be in Him. This is the great wisdom of God. God's great book of life, I say, is not to be read by any eyes but the eyes of a believer, and when he reads the book, he can only read his own name in it. But indeed Paul, by an apostolic spirit and discerning charity, might speak as he did: "Whose names are written in the book of life." The book of election and the book of Christ's sheep can be read by no eyes but the eyes of a believer, and this is enough, we need no more.

It would be enough to confound all things in the church of Christ if so be that the secret books of God's purposes were visible unto and legible by believers. If I may so speak, there would be no living in the world if men knew who were elected and who not. The very doctrine, therefore, you see how many tumults it raises; how much more would it be, if they saw the thing?

Take heed; remember that Christ is consecrated to be the way to heaven. He is consecrated to be so for a particular number of men. No man can know himself to be of that number but a believer, and every believer may. Whenever a poor creature can assure his heart before God that he, in the sense and plain conviction of his deserving hell, and of his being utterly unable to do anything to bring him to heaven, takes Christ as God's appointed way and ventures his all upon the slain Son of God, this man is a believer, and the way was consecrated for him. As soon as he is in it, he may know it. Make but your calling sure, and you make your election sure thereby.

2. Whatever darkness there be about this, whether the way was consecrated for you, you have encouragement to venture upon the way by all the Scripture. It is not the doctrine of the purpose of God on the death of Christ that is the ground of our faith; it is the doctrine about the sufficiency of Christ's death. It is the doctrine of the gospel, wherein the preaching of the Saviour and great salvation is brought to every man's door so closely that the issue must be either an acceptance unto salvation, or a refusal with the great aggravation of condemnation; and so will the judgment at the last day proceed.

PERSECUTED BUT NOT FORSAKEN

An account of Mary Churchman (c. 1654-1734). Her early years were the time when Dissenters (or Nonconformists) were most bitterly persecuted by the Church of England.

Agreeably to what my parents educated me in, I was zealous for the established church, and thought all fanatics who dissented from it. I had as much prejudice against Dissenters, and as great an inclination to persecute, as Paul had. There lay a way through my father's yard for Mrs. Marling, a godly woman, to go to the meeting, which she did every Lord's day. I really thought it my duty to set his great dog to molest her, and used sometimes to encourage him for half-a-mile together, with the most bitter invectives, such as saying, "My dog would smell the blood of a fanatic," etc. The cur, though bad enough to others, yet such was the preventing providence of God, never once fastened upon this gracious person; notwithstanding for some time I constantly made it my business to set him upon her.

When I was about eighteen years of age, it pleased the Lord to lay on me a languishing fit of sickness, which raised in me some promises of a new life, and when recovered, at the persuasion of a neighbour who had been very useful to me in my illness, I went with her to hear that great man of God, Mr. Holcroft.* He preached powerfully of hell and judgment, which made me tremble, and secretly wish I had never come there. Every time he named the name of Christ, it was terrible as the thunder and lightning upon mount Sinai. I wished myself covered with the mountains, and looked upon Christ as my terrible Judge and Enemy. This trouble I vented in floods of tears, and many wishes that I had never been born, and that I had never come there. "For now," thought I, "they will think me one of themselves"; which I at that time was fully resolved against. I seemed now to like their persons worse than ever. Satan also suggested, "What would my relations say? They must never know that I had been at a meeting"; and the like.

Thus, in great hurry and confusion, I sat till service was ended. After sermon, staying for my neighbour, the minister came to me, and asked me where I lived, who I was, and whether I knew anything of the Lord Jesus Christ, etc. But such was my ignorance, and such the hurry and confusion of my mind, that dark was my answer. I told him I believed the world was at an end. Well, home I came, and not one word did I speak to my neighbour, but was very angry in my mind that she should ever ask me to come amongst the Dissenters. I grew worse and worse, insomuch that my mother sent for a doctor, fearing that I should be melancholy, which indeed greatly increased upon me. This was in the

* Francis Holcroft (c. 1629-1693), ejected from the Church of England at Bassingbourn, Cambs., in 1662, and later an Independent preacher.

reign of King Charles II (1660-1685), at which time they were bringing in Popery at a great pace.

The next opportunity which presented, I had an inclination to go to the meeting again, which I did, but very privately. My mother began to mistrust me, and repeated her charge, warning me not to go among such sort of creatures as the fanatics. "For I believe," said she, "they bewitch people into their persuasions." However, I went on a weekday, and the same minister preached from those words: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His: He feedeth among the lilies" (Song 2. 16). The Word was accompanied with power. He was a good Samaritan to me that day. The Spirit of the Lord shone round about me. O then I saw the Lord Jesus become my Husband! He was to me a hiding-place from the storm and tempest, to which I saw my guilty and polluted nature had exposed me.

O happy day indeed! I found Him who, a little before, appeared as a terrible Judge, to be become my Beloved, and I knew that I was His. O joy inexpressible! He was as a bundle of myrrh to my soul. I had not only here a little and there a little from the Word of God, but I had everywhere much. I had everything I wanted to my decayed spirits. I well knew I should meet with hard things from my relations, but I could now pray, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23. 34).

As soon as my father and mother knew that I went to the meeting, Satan put them in a great rage. My father was then high constable,* and had an order from the justices to return all the names of those who frequented the meetings. This made it a hard thing for his own daughter to be a fanatic, which was what he could not bear. And this also increased my difficulty in getting out on the Lord's day, which notwithstanding I sometimes did, and have walked eight, ten, yea, twelve miles to a meeting. If my father at any time understood where I was gone, he spent the day in nothing but oaths and curses, and resolves to murder me. My mother, though an enemy to fanatics, would frequently send a servant to meet me before I could reach home, to tell me not to appear till my father was gone to bed; and I often hid myself in a wood-stack, where I have seen him pass by with a naked knife in his hand, declaring he would kill me before he slept.

In this bondage I lived for one year, but the Lord carried on His work with much power, and enabled me to declare in Zion what He had done for my soul [i.e. publicly profess the Lord's name], which I did on a Lord's day, as the manner then was. I had some fear indeed lest my parents should hear of it, which they did within a fortnight after, by means of a basket woman who came to our house and asked my mother if she had not a daughter. She answered, "Yes." "O," said the woman,

* Not a policeman, but a gentleman responsible for keeping the peace over a considerable district.

“I heard her preach such a sermon* at Mildred [now Meldreth, Cambridgeshire] as raised the admiration of all who heard her.” This my mother obliged her to attest before my father and me, who no sooner heard of it but he immediately turned me out of doors, not suffering me to carry anything with me except the clothes on my back.

I went to a godly gentleman’s house, about four miles distant from my father’s, who had often told me I should be welcome to his house, where my employ should be to be the governess to his seven children. But there the Lord was pleased to try me greatly at my setting out. My mistress, though a good woman, soon became uneasy, thinking her husband showed me too much favour. She was suffered to carry it very cruelly towards me, ordering my lodging with the meanest of the servants, and my diet likewise as coarse as theirs. It being a time of scarcity of provisions, we under-servants lived chiefly upon barley bread. I was obliged to borrow necessary change of linen till my own was washed, nor did I know for months together what it was to have one penny in my pocket.

This great change of living, together with my grief at being banished from my father’s house, brought me so low that a sore fit of sickness ensued. My life not being long expected, the gentleman sent a messenger to acquaint my mother that I had a great desire to see her; but as soon as the messenger informed my father, he replied, if he did not immediately get out of his yard he would shoot him dead. However, about a fortnight after, my mother sent me a box of wearing apparel, which I received with these words on my thoughts: “For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” (Matt. 6. 32).

(To be concluded)

BOOK REVIEW

Stars in God’s Sky, by Faith Cook; paperback; 160 pages; price £8.95; published by Evangelical Press, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a completely different type of book from the biography of Bunyan we recommended last month, but it is written in the same excellent, interesting style. We look forward to reading any of Faith Cook’s books.

Stars in God’s Sky is sub-titled “Short Biographies of Extraordinary Ordinary Christians.” There are nine of them altogether. Some are very well known (John Foxe, John Gifford); some much-less-known; and some unknown – from far-off days and from recent days. One little-known Suffolk man we actually knew personally.

This is a book which will appeal to many, especially those who are not great readers and who find a large book forbidding. As the chapters are completely separate, *Stars in God’s Sky* is the kind of book which can be picked up and put down. We recommend it.

* This was, of course, her testimony before the church.

THE TOLLING BELL

In former days it was the custom, when a person died or a funeral was about to take place, for the church bell slowly and solemnly to toll.

Oft as the bell, with solemn toll,
Speaks the departure of a soul;
Let each one ask himself, "Am I
Prepared, should I be called to die?"

Only this frail and fleeting breath
Preserves me from the jaws of death;
Soon as it fails, at once I'm gone,
And plunged into a world unknown.

Then, leaving all I loved below,
To God's tribunal I must go;
Must hear the Judge pronounce my fate,
And fix my everlasting state.

But could I bear to hear Him say,
"Depart, accursed, far away!
With Satan, in the lowest hell,
Thou art for ever doomed to dwell."

Lord Jesus! help me now to flee,
And seek my hope alone in Thee.
Apply Thy blood, Thy Spirit give,
Subdue my sin, and in me live.

Then, when the solemn bell I hear,
If saved from guilt, I need not fear;
Nor would the thought distressing be,
Perhaps it next may toll for me.

Rather, my spirit would rejoice,
And long, and wish, to hear Thy voice;
Glad when it bids me earth resign,
Secure of heaven, if Thou art mine.

John Newton (1725-1807)

He that lives in sin and expects happiness hereafter, is like him that soweth cockle and expects to fill his barn with wheat or barley.

Bunyan

Men left to their own wills will rather go to hell than be beholden to free grace for salvation.

Elisha Coles

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JULY 2009

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

CALVINISM

There was once a young, flippant song-writer whose life was changed by the grace of God. When he began to speak of the riches of God's grace to such a hell-deserving sinner, people told him he was a Calvinist. Angrily he disputed it. He knew nothing of Calvin. He was not his follower.

We are reminded that this month is the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin, and we thank God for his memory and witness. Calvin did not *invent* the doctrines of free and sovereign grace commonly called Calvinism. They are embodied in Scripture, and were expounded by Paul. Calvin's great work was to explain them and systemise them, especially in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. It has truly been said that Calvinism is the gospel.

The young song-writer was Joseph Swain (1761-1796). He died at the early age of 35, but didn't he love to extol the grace of God (even if he had been ignorant that people called it "Calvinism")!

"O the vast mysteries of Thy love!
How high, how deep, how wide it rolls!
Its fountain springs in heaven above,
Its streams revive our drooping souls."

So we give thanks for the memory of John Calvin, but we follow him only as he followed Christ.

J.C. Philpot wrote:

"By the singular clearness of his style, his deep, scriptural knowledge, the readiness and aptness of his quotations, and the full mastery which he had of his subject, Calvin became a teacher of teachers, and a preacher to preachers. Under his pen the Scriptures uttered a definite creed; sounded by his lips, the gospel trumpet gave forth a certain sound; a harmony and consistency were seen to pervade the whole of divine revelation; and his hand, it was at once felt, had seized the clue, the only clue which led the convinced sinner safely through those mazes where so many before had wandered in confusion and sorrow. Grace having shone into his soul was reflected, as in a mirror, by his clear understanding, and thence, as he directed it upon the pages of inspired truth, the Scripture was seen to be illuminated as with a new and immediate light from heaven.

“His writings have, therefore, influenced directly or indirectly every preacher and every writer who has been of any service to the church of God from that time to this. His system is so thoroughly scriptural, so accurately drawn out, and so firmly and compactly welded together, that it not only commends itself to the conscience of all who are taught of God, but presents an impenetrable front to all adversaries.

“We Nonconformists and Dissenters ... under God owe mainly to him the leading principles of our faith and practice; for we are the spiritual descendants of that holy band of Puritan refugees who, returning from Switzerland after the persecution of Queen Mary, introduced into this country those pure principles of religious worship, learnt from Calvin and his disciples, which have placed us in irreconcilable opposition to the mimicry and mummery of a worldly establishment.”

CHRIST MADE A CURSE

Part of a sermon preached by John Calvin in Geneva in 1558.

Text: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3. 13).

If our only hope of salvation rested upon the condition that we fulfil our duty, we would all be condemned; for we have all fallen short in many different ways and are, therefore, guilty in the eyes of God. Indeed, even the holiest amongst us can never claim to have reached a state of perfection, never again to fall, and free from all infirmity. We are, therefore, led to conclude that we will all be lost and condemned when God calls us to account. This is man’s true condition, despite the high regard he may have for himself. Therefore, we need some means of escape from the curse we are under. Otherwise, what good will it do us to have our ears daily assailed by the Word of God? It will only push us closer towards eternal death. Thus, in order that the Word of God should profit and assist us to find salvation, we have to find a way of escape from the sentence of judgment pronounced upon the human race. Paul points out the way of escape to us here: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” He shows us that it was not in vain that our Lord Jesus Christ hung on the tree, for He suffered to bear the curse of all those He would call to salvation.

As we have said, we are all under this curse, which means it was necessary for our Lord to take our burden of sin upon Himself. In the law of Moses it is written, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Deut. 21. 23). Our Lord commanded that the bodies of the dead should be removed from sight, because it was a disgrace to see a human body thus defiled, and therefore He desired it to be taken away. Yet when God

pronounced this curse upon all who hung upon a tree, He knew only too well what was going to happen to His only Son. For the Lord Jesus Christ did not suffer such a death by accident, nor according to the whim of man. Whilst it is true that He was crucified by unbelievers, it had been ordained by the will of God (Acts 2. 23; 4. 28). As it is written, God so loved the world that He did not even spare His only Son, but delivered Him up to death for us. Indeed, if His death had been determined by Judas alone, who had Him wickedly and forcibly led away, this could not be the foundation for our salvation at all. We must remember that God had appointed it thus, as Peter expounds in greater depth in Acts 2. 23, where he states that the wicked hands that crucified our Lord Jesus did no more than God had previously determined in His will. Thus, when we read that our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, we must remember that it was all for our salvation, because by this means God was seeking to reconcile us to Himself. Therefore, when God said, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," He was not ignorant of what was going to occur, for all had been settled and predetermined.

These two facts must be carefully held together – that God has said that whoever hangs upon a tree is cursed, but that it was His will for His own Son to suffer thus. Why was this? He took our burden upon Himself, as our Substitute, and made Himself, as it were, the chief of sinners on our behalf. Jesus Christ became a curse in order to deliver us from the curse of the law. It may seem harsh and strange at first sight that the Lord of Glory, He who has all sovereign authority, and before whom all the angels of heaven tremble and prostrate themselves, should be subject to a curse. But we must call to mind what Paul wrote in the first letter to the Corinthians, that is to say, that gospel teaching is foolishness to the human race, who regard themselves as wise (1 Cor. 1. 18, 23).

Indeed, in this way God humbles us for our folly. For there is enough wise and good instruction, if we care to heed it, in the heaven and earth around us; yet we are blind and shut our eyes to God's wisdom displayed in nature. This is why He has opened up a new way to draw us to Himself – through something which we deem foolish. Thus we must not judge what we read here concerning the curse to which the Son of God was subject by our own human reasoning. Instead, we should delight in such a mystery and give glory to God that He loved our souls so much that He redeemed them at such inestimable cost to Himself. Far from detracting from the majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ or obscuring the glory which the Holy Scriptures attribute to Him, this teaching provides occasion to glorify Him even more.

Indeed, may we all do so, for here is our Lord Jesus Christ refusing to consider it robbery (as Paul expresses it) to reveal Himself in His

infinite glory (Phil. 2. 6). He willingly emptied Himself; He not only took upon Himself a human nature and became a man, but He also submitted to a most shameful death in the sight of both God and man. How precious to Him we must have been for Him to allow Himself to experience such extreme suffering for our redemption! If we could but taste something of what this implies, we would forever magnify the unspeakable grace which surpasses all human understanding. However, although we cannot comprehend it fully, and can only fathom the hundredth part of it, it delights us to know that we can grasp something of its meaning, however small.

Yet how this exposes the malice and perversity that is in man! For when Paul declares that our Lord Jesus Christ became a curse for us, it washes over us. There are even those who are so depraved that they will see this as an occasion to behave scandalously, abandoning the gospel altogether when they hear of the way in which Christ has redeemed us. Such people say, "What! Can it be that the Son of God, the fountain of all that is good, and the One who sanctifies us, has been cursed?" To their way of thinking, God has acted in an unreasonable and disorderly fashion. But (as I have been saying), God had to stoop to this "folly" because we did not respond to His wisdom, though the way was clearly evident; thus He exposes our own ignorance. We can only wonder at the mysteries of God, for their significance may be obscure to us and seem strange; for in the face of such wonders, our intellect fails and our powers of reasoning are confounded.

The fact that the Son of God became a curse for us demands a fuller examination of our sinful state. Indeed, we begin to realise that we are detestable in the eyes of God, that is, until our sins and iniquities have been cleansed in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. For even if all the angels of heaven were to be made answerable for us, the price they would pay would be insufficient. The only One able to make satisfaction for our sins is the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, when He came to this world, it was not by a display of divine and heavenly power that He paid our debt of eternal death. How, then, did He come? In weakness; indeed, not only so, but He was accursed. If this had not been the case, our burdens would have crushed us and all would have perished in the abyss. When we understand that the Son of God, the Lamb without blemish, the mirror and fountain of all righteousness, that this One was cursed for us, should we not be horrified at the thought of all our sins and engulfed in despair until God rescues us in His grace and infinite mercy?

Therefore, let us be aware that when God says He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, it is to bring us to a state of complete humility. We can never be humble unless we are first stripped of self-confidence

and become ashamed at what lies within us. Then we are frightened and lost, knowing that the wrath of God hangs over us until the remedy is applied to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus our whole life is detestable in God's sight and there is no means of reconciliation with Him apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, who takes away the curse which is upon us and bears it Himself.

Now each time that we read this passage, we should arise and present ourselves before the judgment seat of God, aware that there is a pit waiting to swallow us up if we remain as we are. Let us feel our lost condition and be ashamed before God. Furthermore, let us magnify the grace brought to us by the Son of God, and be careful not to detract from His worth in any way whatsoever, even though He became a curse. This ought, rather, to stir us to render all the praise that He deserves, for He has proved our salvation to be so precious to Him.

Moreover, let us properly appreciate such a pledge of our salvation and display of the love God has for us, and let us not doubt that we are acceptable in God's sight when we approach Him. For He has redeemed us at such a cost, as Peter shows in his first Epistle – not with silver or corruptible things but with the Lord Jesus Christ who became a ransom for us (1 Pet. 1. 18). Therefore, we must trust that whenever we come in His name to ask for mercy, it will be bestowed upon us. But if we come believing that we have a scrap of merit, what good is it? We know how much the Father loves the Son, and how precious His death was in His sight. For this reason, we can have full confidence that God will forgive us and be favourable and kind to us if we cleave to what Paul shows us here: namely, that our Lord Jesus Christ spared nothing for us, even to the point of bearing our curse.

From *John Calvin's Sermons on Galatians* (Banner of Truth 1997)

God overlooks our unworthiness and accepts us because He sees the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all our transgressions are blotted out. This is the first benefit that comes to us directly from the Lord Jesus Christ. But there is also a second. Although by nature we are perverse and our free will (as the papists call it) is completely wild, men still believe in their own worth. This is despite the fact that they are full of malice, with twisted, sinful and corrupt personalities. Although, I say, we are in such a condition, the Lord Jesus Christ grants us grace so that we may seek what is good and detest our sins. For as long as we remain in our sinful state, we seem to boast and revel in our fleshliness. But when once we have tasted the inestimable love of our God and known the Lord Jesus Christ, we become so affected by His Holy Spirit that we condemn evil and seek to draw nearer to God in conformity to His holy will. This is, therefore, the second benefit.

John Calvin

QUIETNESS IN ADVERSITY

From Calvin on The Lamentations of Jeremiah

“The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him” (Lam. 3. 24).

The prophet intimates in this verse that we cannot stand firm in adversities except we be content with God alone and His favour; for as soon as we depart from Him, any adversity that may happen to us will cause our faith to fail. It is then the only true foundation of patience and hope to trust in God alone, and this is the case when we are persuaded that His favour is sufficient for our perfect safety. In this sense it is that David calls God his portion (Psa. 16. 5). But there is in the words an implied contrast, for most men seek their happiness apart from God. All desire to be happy, but as the thoughts of men wander here and there, there is nothing more difficult than so to fix all our hopes in God so as to disregard all other things.

This then is the doctrine which the prophet now handles, when he says that those alone could hope, that is, persevere in hope and patience, who have so received God as their portion as to be satisfied with Him alone and to seek nothing else besides Him. But he speaks emphatically, that his *soul* had thus *said*. Even the unbelieving are ashamed to deny what we have stated, that the whole of our salvation and happiness is found in God alone. Then the unbelieving also confess that God is the fountain of all blessings, and that they ought to acquiesce in Him; but with the mouth only they confess this, while they believe nothing less. This then is the reason why the prophet ascribes what he says to his *soul*, as though he had said that he did not boast, like hypocrites, that God was his portion, but that of this he had a thorough conviction. *My soul* has said, that is, I am fully convinced that God is “my portion; therefore will I hope in Him.” We now understand the meaning of this passage.

It remains for us to make an application of this doctrine: that we may not then fail in adversities, let us bear in mind this truth, that all our thoughts will ever wander and go astray until we are fully persuaded that God alone is sufficient for us, so that He may become alone our heritage. For all who are not satisfied with God alone are immediately seized with impatience, whenever famine oppresses them, or sword threatens them, or any other grievous calamity. And for this reason Paul also says, “If God be for us, who can be against us? I am persuaded that neither famine, nor nakedness, nor sword, nor death, nor life, can separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ” (Rom. 8. 31, 35-39). Then Paul lays hold of the paternal favour of God as a ground of solid confidence; for the words *in Christ* sufficiently show that those are mistaken interpreters who take this love passively, as though he had said

that the faithful would never cease to love God, though He exercised them with many afflictions. But Paul meant that the faithful ought so to fix their minds on God alone, that whatever might happen, they would not yet cease to glory in Him. Why? Because God is their life in death, their light in darkness, their rest in war and tumult, their abundance in penury and want. It is in the same sense our prophet now says, when he intimates that none hope in God but those who build on His paternal favour alone, so that they seek nothing else but to have Him propitious to them.

It afterwards follows: "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lam. 3. 25). He continues the same subject. He however adds now something to it, even that God always deals mercifully with His servants, who recumb [recline] on Him and who seek Him. We hence see that the last verse is confirmed, where he said that he was content with God alone, while suffering all kinds of adversity. How so? for God, he says, is "good unto them that wait for Him." It might have been objected and said that adversities produce sorrow, weariness, sadness and anguish, so that it cannot be that they retain hope who only look to God alone; and it is no doubt true that, when all confess that they hope in God, they afterwards run here and there; and the consequence is that they fail in their adversities.

As then this might have been objected to the prophet, he gives indirectly this answer, that God is good to those who wait for Him, as though he had said that the confidence which recumbs on God alone cannot disappoint us, for God will at length show His kindness to all those who hope in Him. In short, the prophet teaches us here, that the blessings of God, by which He exhilarates His own children, cannot be separated from His mercy or His paternal favour. Such a sentence as this: "Whatever can be expected is found in God," would be deemed frigid by many, for they might object and say, as before stated, that they were at the same time miserable. Hence the prophet reminds us here that God's blessings flow to us from His favour as from a fountain, as though he had said, "As a perennial fountain sends forth water, so also God's goodness manifests and extends itself."

We now, then, understand the prophet's meaning. He had indeed said that we ought to acquiesce in God alone; but now he adds, by way of favour, regarding the infirmity of men, that God is kind and bountiful to all those who hope in Him. The sum of what he states is, as I have said, that God's goodness brings forth its own fruits, and that the faithful find by experience that nothing is better than to have all their thoughts fixed on God alone. God's goodness, then, ought to be understood, so to speak, as actual, even what is really enjoyed. As, then, God deals bountifully with all who hope in Him, it follows that they cannot be

disappointed while they are satisfied with Him alone, and thus patiently submit to all adversities. In short, the prophet teaches here what the Scripture often declares, that “hope maketh not ashamed” (Rom. 5. 5).

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as it is expedient for us to be daily chastised by Thy hand, we may willingly submit to Thee and not doubt but that Thou wilt be faithful, and not prove us with too much rigour, but that Thou wilt consider our weakness, so that we may thus calmly bear all Thy chastisements until we shall at length enjoy that perfect blessedness which is now hid to us under hope, and as it were sealed, until Christ Thy Son shall reveal it at His coming. Amen.

LETTERS BY WILLIAM GADSBY

NONE LIKE THE GOD OF JESHURUN

My dear Friend in the glorious Head of the Church,

I received your epistle, and am greatly obliged to you for it. I was sorry to learn that our dear brother Martin was so ill, but much pleased and profited to find that our blessed Lord so sweetly and powerfully supported his mind.

Indeed, in very deed, there is no God like the God of Jeshurun. None can save like Him; none can succour, comfort and support like Him; no, nor can anyone give timely reproof like Him. Through the rich boundings of His matchless grace, I have in thousands of instances proved Him to be a very present help in time of trouble; yea, and have proved His very reproofs to be mercies. Our covenant God has treasured up in Christ, our glorious Head, an indescribable fulness of all real blessings for His blood-bought family; and honours crown His blessed brow, they are all free. Yet daily experience, as well as the Word of God, teaches us that we stand in as much need of the sweet operation and divine unction of God the Holy Ghost to reveal and make them manifest in the conscience as we needed Christ to die for us. Thus our Three-One God is become our complete salvation, both in its appointment, contrivance, accomplishment, and in its application and consummation in bliss and blessedness; and He is sure so to work as to cause His people to give Him all the glory.

Were it not for the strange methods He takes with me, the cursed pride of my heart would be for taking some glory to self. I can assure you I am at times so disgusted at and sickened with my old man that I long for the time to come when he will sink to rise no more. Well, well;

sentence of death is passed upon him, and it is sure to be executed. And O, my dear friend, what a shouting day that will be!

A few days before yours came to hand, one of our friends died, and she said to her husband just before she departed, "Come, John, help me to shout; for He is come at last!"

Manchester, October 14th, 1829.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

My dear Friends,

I received your very kind letter, for which I am thankful. I assure you it often affords me pleasure to find that I have a place in the hearts of God's dear family; for next to union with my dear Lord and Master, I esteem union to His blood-bought, heaven-bound family.

Among the blessings in which your soul delights, you have also your sorrows; for both of which may you be thankful, since they are all tokens of our dear Lord's love, and a proof that He has not forgotten you. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."

These are eventful times, but the dear children of God have no just cause to fear, for they are the special care of a covenant God, and He is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind. All things must work together for their real good. We enjoy a sweet and solemn frame of mind when we are enabled "to sing of mercy and judgment," and feelingly to say, "The Lord hath done and will still do all things well."

What fools we are! At least I can say what a fool I am! Were I but wise enough always to act wisely, I should never want to mend the work of God, either in providence or in grace. But, alas, alas! this is one of my crying crimes. The cursed pride of my heart is so frequently engaged in finding fault with God's ways that I blush for shame, and often wonder that the Lord puts up with my brutish ways. But, thanks to His lovely name, He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are but dust. The matchless nature of His love passeth all understanding; and when His gracious Majesty is pleased to shed it abroad in our hearts, we are compelled to say that it is better than wine, stronger than death, and better than life. Indeed, life without it is but death at best. The blessed enjoyment of this love sweetens all our cares, and makes death itself desirable.

I can assure you that I am quite a mystery to myself; therefore I do not wonder at other people thinking me mad. For if my life depended upon it, I cannot always keep my heart in a direct line with my head; for my judgment says that the Lord's ways are at all times righteous, but my poor heart often inquires how these things can be. But when my dear Lord is graciously pleased in a manifestive way to put on my court dress (the Lord my righteousness), call me to court, banquet me with some of

the rich treasures of His heart, show me His lovely face, tell me some of His secrets, and draw me into His very bosom and heart, I feel a modest blush, a sacred joy, profound reverence and holy triumph. O what filth a fleshly religion then appears! Then the language of my heart is, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

Well, my dear friends, a few more troubles, and a few more love-visits from our dear Lord, and we shall be with and like our adorable Head. I was sorry to hear of your trials, but I thanked God for you and on your behalf, that you were in very deed in the Lord's path. Be assured all is well.

Manchester, November 1830.

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

My dear Friends in the Lord Jesus Christ,

I received yours. The moment I read it I felt for you and said, "How true it is that in the world we must have tribulation; but how indescribably blessed it is that in Christ we have peace!" – bless His precious name, peace with God, peace of conscience by faith in His blood and love. Here we have all things and abound; "for He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Yes, my dear friends, though the world seems to frown, remember this is not your rest; and be assured, "all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." The Lord enable you to remember, and sweetly and feelingly to sing David's song: "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."

"Be not so with God." How? Why, although neither my outward circumstances nor my inward feelings be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, nor as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain; though everything appear to be the reverse of this, nevertheless covenant mercies stand sure, for ever sure, and must and shall be enjoyed in due course, as ordered by infinite wisdom.

O the matchless wonders of God's boundless grace! May my dear friends be filled with them in this their day of trouble. Blessed Spirit, fill them with Thy sweet unction, and bathe them in the dear Redeemer's blood and love.

"Trials may press of every sort;
They may be sore; they *must* be short;

We now believe, but soon shall view
The greatest glories God can show."

My prayer is that the Lord will preserve you in His fear and keep you from taking any wrong step, and that you may be enabled to keep the Lord in view in all that you do, think or say; and sure I am that in the end you will find all work together for good. May the Lord the Spirit seal upon your hearts the sweet and solemn song of Habakkuk, as in 3. 17, 18. (See also Micah 7. 8-10.)

I do assure you that I feel for you, and I hope the Lord will both direct and support you. I have always found that real faith must be tried, and sometimes as by fire. Real faith has the most work to do in hot fires and deep waters, and she can very often see the clearest in dark nights, and stand the firmest and fight the most courageously in the greatest dangers. When sense and reason fail, faith has to believe in hope against hope; but in the end she is sure to shout, Victory. Real faith is sure to sicken in the sunshine of common sense and reason; for it is an atmosphere in which she cannot well thrive.

My dear friends, read Hebrews 11, and take a survey of the family to which you belong; and may God enable you to take courage, and bless you with the same faith in lively exercise, and then I am sure that tribulation will work patience.

Manchester, February 7th, 1832.

RETIREMENT OF GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY SECRETARY

After more than twenty years as Secretary of the Societies, Mr. Henry Mercer will retire on September 30th. We are deeply grateful to him for the many years of loving service he has given.

We are pleased to announce that Mr. David Christian, of Bethel Chapel, Luton, has been appointed to take his place. At present he is assisting Mr. Mercer, and will become Secretary from October 1st. (Contact details in the September *Gospel Standard*, if the Lord will.)

We pray God's blessing on the new appointment.

Our earthly callings must give way to our heavenly. We must say to them, as Christ to His disciples, "Tarry you here, while I go and pray yonder."

George Swincock

THOUGHTS FROM PHILPOT

The operation of truth upon the heart is like the light of day, gradual and yet effective, or like dew and rain, which soften and fertilise the ground, we can scarcely tell how. So divine truth in the lips, or written by the pen of a servant of God, often has a very gradual influence upon the mind; but this influence, though imperceptible, is not less real, for it is due not to the man but to the truth which he proclaims, and which the blessed Spirit seals with power upon the conscience.

Many people think that illness is the best time for religion and for being prayerful and spiritually-minded; but this is a great mistake. When the illness is severe it takes such possession of the whole mind, and at the same time so enfeebles it, that it has not power to act as in health. I have often found that when the main force of the illness is over and I am beginning to recover, that is a good time, if the Lord is pleased to draw the soul upward to Himself, to read, pray and meditate. But when illness is severe, the soul needs divine support, patience, submission, resignation, and to lie passive in the Lord's hands, believing He doeth all things well. It is then we need special support, so that the mind may not be distracted, but rest upon the Lord's goodness and mercy and what we hope has been felt in times past. I remember what poor Thomas Copeland once said to me in his illness. "People," he said, "think that illness is a good time to seek God; but they will find when they are very ill that the illness itself occupies all their thoughts and feelings." At the same time there are times and seasons in illness when the weight of bodily affliction seems partially removed, and then if the Lord be pleased to work by His Spirit and grace, there is a drawing up of the soul unto Himself.

I do see the deep necessity for every child of God to walk much in godly fear. Sin and Satan are never off their watch if we are. Sin is like a spring which can only be kept from expanding to its full length by continual pressure. Take away or relax the pressure, it expands in a moment to its full length. The fear of God in the heart is the pressure upon the spring, and if that relax or let go, sin extends itself in a moment, and who can tell how far it will go? As Francis Spira said, "Man knows the beginning of sin, but who bounds the issues thereof?" It is much easier to check sin in its first movement than when it has gained strength. If the egg be not crushed, it will break out into a viper. What should we do without free grace, the atoning blood of the Lamb, and the work of the Holy Spirit to make the gospel precious to the soul?

Christ is not to be found in the path of carnal ease and worldly joy. It is in tribulation and trouble alone that He is really sought and really

found. We cannot choose for ourselves what that trouble shall be; but its fruits and effects must be good if they lead us up to the Lord Jesus Christ, or bring down any measure of blessing from Him. There is so much of seeking and serving the Lord with half a heart; so much mingling of the flesh with the spirit, and trying to unite the manna of the wilderness with the flesh-pots of Egypt! But we may be certain that when the taste is vitiated with the onions and the garlic, there is no relish for angel's food. This then is one of the benefits of sanctified affliction, that it purges the appetite from delighting in the gross food of Egypt, to give it a taste for the bread which came down from heaven that a man should eat thereof and not die.

If we view religion as a body, may we not say that the doctrines of the gospel are the bones, experience the flesh, and the blessed Spirit the life of both bones and flesh? The doctrines of the gospel support all sound experience, but at the same time are so clothed with it that they are not visible except through the medium of the flesh. But in the body the flesh could not stand without the support of the bones. So in religion what would experience be unless supported by sound doctrine? But again, take the flesh from the bones and you have nothing but a dry skeleton. So take the experience of the truth from the doctrines of truth, and you have nothing but what Joseph Hart calls dry doctrine. Again, without the blessed Spirit, what is either doctrine or experience but a lifeless lump? The dead Calvinists have the bones without the flesh; the Arminians have the flesh without the bones; the daily experimentalists, for such there are, and such there were even under Mr. Huntington, have bones and flesh without life. But the living family of God have bones and flesh and life, for they have truth in doctrine, truth in experience, and truth in life and power; and thus religion with them is a living body.

It is poor hearing when nothing is carried away. The gleaners in the harvest-field would not be satisfied to carry home ears out of which every gram of corn had dropped; and those who glean in the fields of Boaz, and are privileged to glean among the sheaves, may well be dissatisfied unless they carry some corn home.

Whatever ground others may stand upon, there is one on which I can never stand – no, not for a single moment – and that is my own righteousness. And if we are to have some standing-ground – or how else can we stand for time or eternity? – what rock can there be for our feet but that which God laid in Zion? Being driven from every other standing-place by the law of God, the convictions of our own conscience, and a view of our dreadful, sinful heart, we feel compelled to show to others, when called upon to do so, the peril of standing upon such a

sandy foundation as self; and having seen and felt something of the blessedness and suitability of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can hold Him up to others as a sure foundation, if the Lord be pleased to reveal it to their hearts.

May our desire be to know more of divine things by divine teaching; to see and feel more of our own weakness and helplessness; to have a stronger faith in the blessed Lord; and to have clearer and sweeter manifestations of His love and blood and grace. This will produce a separating influence from the world, will give more strength to fight against sin and Satan, and will eventually bring the soul off more than conqueror through Him who has loved it with an everlasting love.

I have often thought what sweet and blessed words those were which dropped from His sacred lips when upon earth, which I need not quote at length, for you will find them, John 3. 14-16. It is not our knowledge, or wisdom, or gifts, or abilities, or usefulness, or anything of the kind that can save us, but looking unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and being blessed with a living faith in Him. Many a poor creature who has scarcely been able to say anything during life, and been seemingly outshone by great professors of religion, has received that into his soul, dropped into his heart, as it were, from the mouth of God, which has saved him with an everlasting salvation, whilst the other has sunk into eternity without hope. So I would encourage every poor, tried, tempted soul still to look, and still to long, still to seek, and still to knock till the Lord appears, for it is in this way that deliverance is obtained, Christ revealed, mercy manifested, and pardon sealed upon the heart.

Men's sins are innumerable, yet they are but cyphers to the vast sums of grace that are every day expended; because they are finite, but mercy is infinite.

Charnock

The law presseth on a man till he flies to Christ. Then it says, Thou hast gotten a refuge, I forbear to follow thee. Thou art wise, thou art safe.

Bengelius

Be very thankful that the Lord enables you most of all to dread your own spirit.

Bernard Gilpin

A great French pear is called *le bon Chrétien*, the good Christian, because they say it is never rotten at the core,

George Swinnock

READING GOD'S WORD

From Heaven Taken by Storm by Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

What an infinite mercy is it that God hath honoured us with the Scriptures! The barbarous Indians have not the oracles of God made known to them. They have the golden mines, but not the Scriptures, which are more to be desired than much fine gold (Psa. 19. 10). Our Saviour bids us search the Scriptures (John 5. 39). We must not read these holy lines carelessly, as if they did not concern us, or run them over hastily, as Israel ate the passover in haste, but peruse them with reverence and seriousness. The noble Bereans did search the Scriptures daily (Acts 17. 11). The Scripture is the pandect [compendium] of divine knowledge; it is the rule and touchstone of truth; out of this well we draw the water of life. To provoke to a diligent reading of the Word, labour to have a right notion of Scripture.

Read the Word as a Book made by God Himself. It is given by divine inspiration (2 Tim. 3. 16). It is the library of the Holy Ghost. The prophets and apostles were but God's amanuenses or notaries to write the law at His mouth. The Word is of divine original and reveals the deep things of God to us. That there is a deity is engraven in man's heart, and is to be read in the book of the creatures, but who this God is, and the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, is infinitely above the light of reason; only God Himself could make this known. So for the incarnation of Christ, God and Man hypostatically united in one Person; the mystery of imputed righteousness; the doctrine of faith: what angel in heaven, who but God Himself could reveal these things to us? How may this provoke to diligence and seriousness in reading the Word which is divinely inspired. Other books may be made by holy men, but this Book is indited by the Holy Ghost.

Read the Word as a perfect rule of faith; it contains all things essential to salvation. "I adore the fulness of Scripture," saith Tertullian. The Word teacheth us how to please God, how to order our conversation in the world. It instructs us in all things that belong either to prudence or piety. How should we read the Word with care and reverence, when it contains a perfect model and platform of religion, and is able to make us wise to salvation (2 Tim. 3. 15).

When you read the Word, look on it as a soul-enriching treasury. Search here as for a "vein of silver" (Job 28. 1). In this Word are scattered many divine aphorisms; gather them up as so many jewels. This blessed Book helps to enrich you; it fills your head with knowledge, and your heart with grace; it stores you with promises. A man may be rich in bonds. In this field the pearl of price is hid: what are all the world's riches to these? Islands of spices, coasts of pearl, rocks of

diamonds! These are but the riches that reprobates may have, but the Word gives us those riches which angels have.

Read the Word as a Book of evidences. How carefully doth one read over his evidences? Would you know whether God be your God? Search the record of Scripture. "Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John 3. 24). Would you know whether you are "heirs of the promise"? You must find it in these sacred writings. "He hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification" (2 Thess. 2. 13). They who are vessels of grace shall be vessels of glory.

Look upon the Word as a spiritual magazine [storehouse] out of which you fetch all your weapons to fight against sin and Satan.

1. Here are weapons to fight against sin. The Word of God is a consecrated sword that cuts asunder the lusts of the heart. When pride begins to lift up itself, the "sword of the spirit" destroys this sin. "God resisteth the proud" (1 Pet. 5. 5). When passion vents itself, the Word of God, like Hercules' club, beats down this angry fury. "Anger resteth in the bosom of fools" (Eccles. 7. 9). When lust boils, the Word of God cools that intemperate heat. "Nor unclean person ... hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ" (Eph. 5. 5).

2. Here are weapons to fight against Satan. The Word fenceth off temptation. When the devil tempted Christ, He three times wounded the old serpent with the sword of the Spirit: "It is written" (Matt. 4. 7). Satan never sooner foils a Christian than when he is unarmed and without Scripture weapons.

Look upon the Word as a spiritual glass to dress yourselves by; it is a looking-glass for the blind (Psa. 19. 8). In other glasses you may see your faces; in this glass you may see your hearts. "Through Thy precepts I get understanding" (Psa. 119. 104). This looking-glass of the Word clearly represents Christ. It sets Him forth in His Person, nature, offices, as most precious and eligible. He is altogether lovely (Song 5. 16); He is a wonder of beauty, a paradise of delight. Christ who was veiled over in types is clearly revealed in the glass of the Scriptures.

Look upon the Word as a Book of spiritual receipts. Basil compares the word to an apothecary's shop, which hath all kinds of medicines and antidotes. If you find yourselves dead in duty [religious exercise], here is a recipe: "Thy Word hath quickened me" (Psa. 119. 50). If you find your hearts hard, the Word doth liquify and melt them. Therefore it is compared to fire for its mollifying power (Jer. 23. 29). If you are poisoned with sin, here is an herb to expel it.

Look upon the Word as a sovereign elixir to comfort you in distress; it comforts you against all your sins, temptations and afflictions. What are the promises, but divine cordials to revive fainting souls. A gracious heart goes feeding on a promise as Samson on the honeycomb (Judges 14. 9). The Word comforts against sickness and death. "O death, where

is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15. 55). A Christian dies embracing the promise, as Simeon did Christ (Luke 2. 28).

Read the Word as the last will and testament of Christ. Here are many legacies given to them that love Him: pardon of sin, adoption, consolation. This will is in force, being sealed in Christ's blood. With what seriousness doth a child read over the will and testament of his father, that he may see what is left him.

Read it as a Book by which you must be judged. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12. 48). They who live according to the rules of this Book shall be acquitted; they who live contrary to them shall be condemned. There are two books God will go by: the book of conscience and the Book of Scripture. The one shall be the witness and the other the judge. How should every Christian then provoke himself to read this Book of God with care and devotion! This is that Book which God will proceed by at the last. They who fly from the Word as a guide shall be forced to submit to it as a judge.

ALL THINGS WORKING FOR GOOD

Sermon preached by Benjamin Beddome (1717-1795). Beddome was pastor at the Particular Baptist Chapel, Bourton-on-the-Water, for 52 years, and was author of several of the hymns we sing.

Text: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8. 28).

The things which an apostle had to deliver were not mere matters of opinion, or of doubtful disputation, but of absolute certainty. Primitive Christians received the Word in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, and in this manner primitive preachers delivered it. "We know," said Paul, "that all things work together for good"; we are confirmed in this important truth and wish others to be so too. We know it by divine revelation: it is what the Scriptures abundantly testify. We know it by immediate inspiration, for we also have the Spirit of God and are under His special influence. We know it by experience and observation: "that which we have tasted and handled of the Word of life, declare we unto you."

In this truth all the saints in heaven and on earth are agreed. It is appointed of God that all things shall work together for good to them that love Him, and His counsel shall stand. It is promised, and He will not alter the thing that is gone out of His mouth. What unerring wisdom ordains, almighty power will accomplish. Such also is the love which God bears to His people, and such His concern for their welfare, that He will make all things subservient to their salvation.

I. Attend to the description given of true believers: they are such as “love God,” and are “called according to His purpose.”

1. They are such as “love God.” Carnal men love the world, and the things that are in the world, but Christians love God and savour of the things that are of God. He is the first Object of their esteem, and all His perfections appear to them infinitely amiable. Their hearts exclaim, “How great is His goodness and how great is His beauty!” They love Him with complacency and delight, rejoicing in what He is in Himself and what He is to them. All their confidence is in Him and all their happiness is derived from Him. “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee” (Psa. 73. 25).

His presence supplies the place of every earthly good, and they are happy in Him when they have nothing else to make them so. “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab. 3. 17, 18). They are concerned for His glory, and derive their best enjoyments from the prosperity of His cause and interest in the world. “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.... All my springs are in Thee.”

The Lord’s people are possessed of humility and fear, faith and hope, but love is that by which they are distinguished. This is often discernible when other graces are not so, and is mentioned as having the pre-eminence above the rest. “Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Cor. 13. 13). Love is the life of all the graces and the soul of all religion. It is this that influences the conduct, forms the character, and renders our obedience pleasant and acceptable. This it is that makes us to resemble the Saviour, that fits us for His will on earth, and the enjoyment of Him in heaven.

2. They are “called according to His purpose.” This is expressive of the change wrought upon the soul in regeneration, whereby the calls of the gospel are rendered effectual. “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power.” Three things are implied:

i. That this call is under the special direction of God, being “according to His purpose.” Many are called by the gospel, and but few chosen. Those only obey the call whose hearts are subdued by divine grace. It is the purpose of God that secures our salvation; and but for this, none would be brought to believe and receive the truth.

ii. That when God calls a sinner He does it effectually. It is easy to Him whose work it is. Herein He acts as a Sovereign, whose will cannot be resisted or controlled, while He deals with us as reasonable creatures. He that calls men out of their graves can easily call them off

from their sins. When He passes by the sinner and beholds him in his blood, He saith unto him, Live; and straightway he is quickened who before was dead in trespasses and sins. "And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order?" (Isa. 44. 7). The power that made the world can change the heart, and that power alone is sufficient for so great a work.

iii. This call implies that the sinner was once afar off, but is now made nigh; he is turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Once he was deaf to the voice of conscience and of God; now he is made to hear and obey. He is brought from bondage into liberty, from serving idols, to serve the living and the true God. His language now is, "O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us: but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name" (Isa. 26. 13). May those who have thus been distinguished by divine grace be concerned to walk worthy of God, who hath called them to His kingdom and glory! (1 Thess. 2. 12).

II. Consider the peculiar privilege of such as love God and are called according to His purpose: "all things work together" for their good.

1. Let us observe what things are here intended. The believer has an interest in all good things, and these we are sure will turn to his advantage. Spiritual blessings are good in themselves, and cannot but be so in their tendency and effects; to be blessed with them is to be blessed indeed. But the apostle is not speaking of good things, but of evil things, which, in their own nature, tended to injure and annoy. Hence he asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Evil things, therefore, by the overruling providence and grace of God, shall be productive of good to His people. Among these we may notice the following:

i. All the plots and contrivances of their enemies, however artfully formed or executed. The Lord very often takes the cunning in their own craftiness, and carries the counsels of the froward headlong; and if not, He will make them subservient to some gracious purpose; and that which was aimed at the destruction of the church shall contribute to its greater glory. The more the waters were increased, the higher the ark was lifted up; and the Hebrew worthies were never had in such high esteem as when they passed through the fiery trial uninjured and undismayed. The arrow which does not retort [cast back] upon him that shoots it shall only wound and open the imposthume [abscess] which might otherwise have proved fatal.

ii. All the evils and stratagems of Satan to ruin and destroy shall be overruled for good. He can do no more than what God permits him; his power shall be bounded and his wrath restrained. He goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, but there are some whom he shall not devour; and if he frighten the sheep, it shall bring them nearer to the shepherd. The wounding of Christ's heel shall be the bruising of the serpent's head. Temptation shall excite caution and lead to more importunate prayer. Furious assaults shall stir up to vigorous resistance, and the irritating of corruption shall issue in its mortification.

The shaking of the tree shall make it take deeper root, and the pruning of it make it more fruitful. Satan's accusations against Job tended to illustrate and establish his integrity: "When I am tried," says he, "I shall come forth as gold." His resisting of Joshua the high priest procured him a royal vesture and renewed discoveries of pardoning love. The messenger which he sent to buffet Paul drew forth the compassion of his divine Master and gained him a promise which should be his comfort and support through life: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." It brought God nearer to him, and drove him nearer to God.

iii. The withdrawment of spiritual comfort and the hidings of God's face shall terminate in the good of them that love Him. A state of desertion is very distressing to the soul, but in the end it is often found profitable. The Lord leaves us that we may not leave Him; He forsakes us for a time that He may not forsake us for ever. Hereby He makes sin odious, and creature-comforts tasteless, that heaven may become more desirable. The want of His presence here makes us long for His presence above. Inward distress tends to rouse us from a state of spiritual sloth, quicken us to the duty of self-examination, and prepare us for future consolations; so that, when enjoyed, we value them more highly and preserve them more carefully. When the spouse found her Beloved, who had withdrawn Himself, she "held Him fast, and would not let Him go."

iv. All manner of afflictions, whether ordinary or otherwise, shall be overruled for good. Pain and sickness, worldly losses and disappointments, the unkindness of friends, and the opposition of enemies shall all be overruled by a wise and holy providence. One messenger after another may come with evil tidings, as in the case of Job; deep may call unto deep at the noise of the water-spouts, as in the case of David; but however great and manifold may be the sufferings of the saints, they shall all turn to their advantage at last. Where there is a casting down there shall also be a lifting up, and God will save the humble person.

Afflictions are as needful as ordinances and are sometimes more profitable. He who said, "It is good for me to draw near to God," said

also, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Paul's thorn in the flesh was more useful to him than his rapture into the third heavens. The one had like to have exalted him above measure, the other humbled him; the one left him at a loss whether he was in the body or out of the body, but the other convinced him that he was still in the flesh and in a state of affliction and infirmity. Next to the Saviour Himself there is nothing we have more reason to be thankful for than affliction.

v. Death itself, of whatsoever kind it may be, is the Christian's gain. "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter," said the apostle. Then it is added, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (ver. 36, 37). Death releases the Christian from all his sins and sorrows. At that fatal hour he exchanges labour for rest, a painful warfare for a complete victory, sighs for songs, and earth for heaven. Death is a dark valley (Psa. 23. 4), but it leads to the realms of light and glory. The divine presence supports us in the prospect of death, and the hope of fully enjoying it enables us to triumph over it (1 Cor. 15. 55).

vi. I have not mentioned moral evil as among the things which work for good, as the apostle does not appear to have had any reference to it, but to those natural evils which are common to all believers and which are noticed in different parts of this chapter. It is true indeed that God may and often does overrule even the sins of His people for their good, but as this is not within the compass of the promise, so it is more than in ordinary cases we are warranted to expect. The spirit wounded for sin is often made more watchful against it, and the saints when recovered from their falls are known to walk more circumspectly, and become more useful. But the nature of sin itself is evil, only evil, and its natural consequence is wrath. It injures the body, filling it with various diseases, and unfits it for the service of God. It defiles, debases and injures the soul. It weakens our graces, darkens our evidences, deprives us of comfort, adds a sharpness to all our sorrows, and if it do not shut us out of heaven, it will make us go mourning to the very gates of it.

2. Notice in what manner all things are productive of good to them that love God and who are called according to His purpose. They are said to "work together" for this purpose. All things are at work and the result of all shall be the good of God's chosen. Sometimes they issue in their temporal good. The more the children of Israel were oppressed, the more they grew and multiplied. If not for their temporal good, yet all shall lead to their spiritual advantage, producing the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And not only so, but their eternal good shall be promoted by all the evils they are called to endure in the present life. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4. 17.) More particularly:

i. Things do not work together for our good by any inherent or physical efficacy, but by virtue of a divine appointment and designation. The rough and irregular motions of the wheels are guided by infinite wisdom, for they are said to be full of eyes round about (Ezek. 1. 18). God sometimes works by second causes and sometimes without them. He avails Himself of the pride and ambition of the great as means of delivering His people, though they mean not so, neither do their hearts think so. Men have their ends in view and God has His. They gratify their malice and ambition, and He accomplishes the purposes of His grace. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain” (Psa. 76. 10). The earth shall help the woman (Rev. 12. 16), and the dissemination of error eventually contribute to the spread of truth (Phil. 1. 19).

ii. Not always visibly, though really. Jacob said, “All these things are against me,” but it was not so. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, and the more obscurity attends the object, the greater is the excellency of faith. “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” We must follow the Lord as Abraham did, not knowing whither He will lead us. Confiding in His wisdom and goodness, we shall find light to arise in the darkness, and that uncommon perplexities are the forerunners of the most wonderful salvations.

iii. Not immediately, but eventually. In Abraham’s vision the smoking furnace went before the burning lamp (Gen. 15. 17); one indicated the sorrows and sufferings of the church and the other their happy issue. Job’s trials were very uncommon and his faith was so staggered by them that he said, “Behold, He findeth occasions against me, He counteth me for His enemy” (Job 33. 10). Yet his latter end was better than his beginning. When God brings us forth to the light, we behold His righteousness, admire His wisdom, and are ashamed of our folly (Psa. 73. 22). Subsequent providences tend to explain preceding ones, and we afterwards see the kind and gracious design of those events which to us appeared the most adverse.

iv. Not apart, but in conjunction: all things work *together* for good. It is not one single event that produces the desired effect, but all the providences of God in connection with each other, like the different parts of a machine which is at work for one great end. All second causes are under the direction of the great first cause. That which in itself might be pernicious, when mixed with other ingredients becomes medicinal and salutary. The strings of a musical instrument, if struck in their proper order, yield an agreeable harmony, and the various movements in a complicated piece of machinery complete the design of the artist: but if one string of the instrument be broken, or one movement of the machine be out of order, neither of them will answer the appointed end.

We are often perplexed by viewing only a detached part of the great whole, so that instead of symmetry and order, we see nothing but discord and confusion. A complete view of the whole system would excite our admiration and fill us with the most agreeable surprise. This will be the happiness of the saints in a better world; and what we know not now we shall know hereafter. We shall then see as we are seen, and know as we are known, and be fully assured that "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies" (Psa. 25. 10).

1. If all things work together for good, let this be an antidote against impatience and unbelief. Did we but fully credit this important truth, how easy and happy would it make us in every condition! It was this which taught Paul how to be abased and how to abound, to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. No situation in life could distress him overmuch, for he knew that however it might fare with him by the way, it would be well with him at last. When providences are dark and intricate, we should wait the issue, to see the end of the Lord. Amidst all our present troubles and infirmities, there is something better behind. When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

2. What encouragement is here to true religion! "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The cross is the worst part of religion, and yet even this is better than the best of this world. It is better to suffer with Christ, if we can but suffer like Him, than to reign with Caesar. If we be chastened of the Lord, it is that we may not be condemned with the world. If we have but little peace by the way, we shall have it at last: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psa. 37. 37).

3. If all things work together for good to them that love God, it is to them only, and it will be otherwise with them that love Him not. If we be His enemies, all things will work together *against* us, and end in our final ruin. Our table will become a snare and our prosperity destroy us. The doctrine of the cross will be a stumbling-block and a savour of death unto death to us. In this world we may be comforted, but in the other world we shall be tormented; here we may receive our good things, but there our evil things. God will be better to His people in the end than they expected, and worse to the wicked than they feared. If we be right in ourselves, every thing will be right to us, but if we be wrong, every thing will be wrong to us. "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Tit. 1. 15).

4. If our good be God's end, let His glory be ours; if He seeks our happiness, let us seek His honour. Let us be thankful for all His dispensations in providence and grace; for "whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me" (Psa. 50. 23). Let us also seek to be fruitful; for "herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15. 8). The more we aim at His glory, the more we possess of true religion, and the brighter our evidences of interest in Him. Let our great concern be that Christ may be magnified in us, whether it be by life or by death. Then we may say with Paul, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1. 21).



WATCHING UNTO PRAYER

From Bogatzky's "Golden Treasury"

"Watch ye therefore, and pray always" (Luke 21. 36). "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us" (Heb. 12. 1).

The hearts of men are not like unto clocks, which only want to be wound up once a day. O no! the dulness and distraction are too great and dangerous. We must lift them up many times a day, yea, watch continually to lay aside every weight. Our going out and coming in, nay, all things, even the very least, we must do with prayer, always strictly examining what is the will of the Lord; else if they are done after our own will, they do not tend to the glory of God, and cannot be attended with His blessing.

But if we earnestly strive against our own will in prayer, patiently suffering every hour what the Lord thinks proper to lay upon us, and will be ruled by His hints and slight strokes of His rod, many heavy afflictions, and scourges, and whips, may be avoided; for the burdens which we bring upon ourselves by our own will and impatience are always the heaviest.

A Christian has daily his proper burden, like a clock its weights, by which the flesh is kept under so that the spirit can rise up; therefore, when anything comes cross, he looks upon it as his weight for the day to stir him up to the exercise of prayer and meditation in the Word of God.

O Lord, grant that I may always bear Thy easy yoke, and never be the cause of my own distress and dulness.

"Wait on the Lord, ye trembling saints,
And keep your courage up;
He'll raise your spirit when it faints,
And far exceed your hope."

PERSECUTED BUT NOT FORSAKEN

An account of Mary Churchman (c. 1654-1734) dating from the time when Dissenters were bitterly persecuted by the Church of England.

“When a man’s ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov. 16. 7).

(Concluded from page 191)

I lived in this place [a godly man’s home, where she fled having been turned out of her own home] with much difficulty three years, but in all that time never knew what it was to have one barren Sabbath. I thought my mercies equal to those of the children of Israel. I gathered my manna on the Sabbath, and it always lasted sweet and good; it never cloyed, and I was always hungry, insomuch that I thought, if seeing and hearing the saints sometimes here was so pleasant, what must it be to dwell for ever with them above! I was placed indeed among those where I had frequent opportunities of being convinced that good men are subject to like passions with others. This grieved me, but God did me good by such disappointments, for hereby He brought me more off from the creature to the Creator.

The year following, providence placed me twenty miles another way, where I obtained a Joseph’s character, and a Joseph’s promotion, being greatly valued by many noble families, and especially the Lady Marham, who told me she loved me years before she was personally acquainted with me. She gave me of her liberality, and maintained Christian communion with me. One remark this lady made I very well remember, speaking of the suitableness of the Spirit’s applying the Word to all ranks and conditions: “It is well said,” saith she, “in holy writ, ‘Not many noble are called’; had it been expressed not any noble, what a condition must I have been in!”

Persecution now came on apace. The Dissenters could have no meetings but in woods and corners. I myself have seen our companies often alarmed with drums and soldiers; everyone was fined five pounds a month for being in their company. Here God left me to stagger; Satan suggested, “If you give your body to be burned and have not charity, it is nothing” (1 Cor. 13. 3). But the greater the temptation, the greater was the deliverance, by means of these words, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7. 14). Also, “And white robes were given unto every one of them” (Rev. 6. 11). Blessed be God, Satan by his assaults only bruised my heel; my head remained whole.

While I was in this family, the commissioners came and searched for ministers. Mr. Billies, the gentleman of the house, and Mr. Holcroft, were asleep in a private arbour. I ran with some difficulty and awoke

them, and they made their escape through the hedge; but as I returned the officers surprised me. They went and found some slips of their clothes on the hedges, which made them roar like bloodhounds, after which they came and seized a whole house of goods. These men were Major T. and Colonel C.

But O the great trial now came on. They found and seized my beloved pastor, Mr. Holcroft, and carried him to Cambridge Castle, but even there God appeared wonderfully for him: he preached and many souls were converted in that place. Now God was with us much: He was indeed as a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. And O how did I remember His lovingkindness to me the least of all saints! He not only delivered me from fears, but even death itself; nay, the very flames with which we were threatened were made familiar to me. I was enabled to say, "O death, where is thy sting?" The Lord was a covert from that storm and tempest, and a strong rock in that day of trouble.

Mr. Billies, with whom I lived, had a call to Holland, and as the persecution was very threatening in England, he thought it his duty to accept the call. He gave me an invitation to go with him, assuring me that all things should be in common. As I well knew my circumstances were very precarious, not having anywhere to hide my head when this worthy family was gone from England, this drew me into great straits. I sought the Lord time after time on this account, and it seemed as if He was providing for me in another land. Grace taught me my duty to my parents, though they were enemies to the cross of Christ. Accordingly I acquainted them with this invitation, and that I should comply with it unless their commands were to the contrary. I added in my letter, I should be all obedience to them, saving in matters relating to my God, and though I had not been permitted to see them for seven years past, yet could assure them my affections for them were the same as ever. I begged they would consider of it, and let me know in eight days' time, for all things were ready to embark in a fortnight.

Not hearing from them in the time I set, I took their silence for a consent, and so prepared all things ready for my journey, and set out with my kind friends. Just before we reached Harwich, where we were to take shipping, a messenger from my father overtook me with a letter, the contents of which were as follows: that if I would come home, I should have my liberty to worship God in my own way, but as to my leaving the land, this was what they could not bear; therefore without fail I must come back with the messenger, which I did. Great was the sorrow of parting with my travelling friends, but my duty to my parents surmounted all.

I no sooner entered my father's house, but my mother, in receiving me, fainted away. My father also, though a man of great spirit, offered

to fall on his knees, to ask my pardon for his former cruelty. O amazing work of sovereign grace! When our ways please the Lord, He makes even our enemies to be at peace with us. My father immediately told me I should have my liberty in matters relating to my God. I then humbly offered my obedience to them both on my knees. At supper there was not a mouthful eaten but with tears. I well knew that my God had appeared to my father on my behalf, as He did to Laban of old, and was helped to apply Jacob's promise to myself: "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good" (Gen. 32. 12). The next Sabbath my father came into my chamber by break of day, and told me I should have a horse and a man to wait on me to the meeting, which was at a place called Taft [now Toft, near Cambridge]. Mr. Oddy* (assistant or fellow-pastor with Mr. Holcroft), preached from these words: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Psa. 110. 3). Then I could see electing love the prime cause of all God's dealings with me.

There now appeared a great reformation in the whole family. My father feared to sin for fear of grieving his daughter, and in a little time left off drinking, which was the forerunner of all his other evils. Now I thought I could give my very body to be burned for the souls of my dear relations. The Lord granted me my request on their behalf. In a few years I had not only the pleasure of seeing the conversion of my three brothers, but of seeing them also eminently useful in the church. I found my God reserved His greatest mercies for my greatest trials, for at the death of my dear sister, I had not only the comfort of seeing her conversion, but the great satisfaction of seeing my dear father and mother also converted to the faith of Jesus, though at the eleventh hour. Yea, such was the power and goodness of God that He left not so much as a hoof behind in the whole family.

Surely now I may say that nothing but goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. When we had free liberty from popery and slavery under our great deliverer, King William III,** many were the favours which I enjoyed. God gave me the best and tenderest of husbands, a prophet of the Lord indeed, whose good instructions abide with my children to this day. In short the Lord has sanctified every trial to me, and followed me with pleasure and comfort in my old age.

MARY CHURCHMAN.

This excellent Christian was subject to much affliction of body in the latter part of her life, but in the general she was very lively in her

* Joseph Oddy (d. 1687), ejected in 1662 from Meldreth. Along with Francis Holcroft he is buried at Oakington just outside the churchyard. Mr. Ralph Warboys used to take a great interest in "the Oakington graves."

** King of England from 1689 to 1702. At the beginning of his reign freedom of worship was allowed.

soul. At the age of seventy-four, she had some near views of her approaching dissolution, and the last time she came downstairs, which was four days before her death, she said that her God might leave her to the trial of her faith, but His covenant was unalterable, and then further declared that now for months past she had conversed with the Lord face to face in private retirement. "Yea," saith she, "such hath been my near communion with my God that He hath already given me the white robe of Christ's righteousness, as an earnest of my standing before His throne."

Her memory was very quick and her understanding clear. She gave choice advice to her children with the utmost caution and tenderness. She said that she had not the least concern about future events, for now she believed the decrees of God, and knew that He did all things well. It rejoiced her that Christ was the great God and the King of peace, and that the government was upon His shoulders. The evening before she died, she called one of her children, and though her speech a little faltered, she expressed herself thus: "I have now," said she, "new comfort, which surpasses all my former experience, from those words, 'Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him' (Heb. 7. 25). O," said she, "that word 'uttermost' is gone into heaven before me! I now remember the days of His espousals, when I followed Him in the wilderness, and when I was banished from my father's house; then my God saved me to the uttermost. He saved me to the uttermost in all His providences, when in a married state; He saved me to the uttermost in all my children; He saved me to the uttermost in the state of my widowhood; He hath saved me to the uttermost in all my afflictions, and now He saves me to the uttermost in my sickness; yea, this High Priest saves my faith against all the assaults of Satan, on my deathbed. As Man He suffered, as God He saves to the uttermost."

After this she turned herself to her neighbours, who were weeping, and said, "Here is a word for you: Christ saves to the uttermost." And then, addressing herself to her child, she said, "O my dear child! I want to take you with me to heaven, but Christ will save you to the uttermost. You have been the gift of God to me, but wherein you have been useful, take heed of pride, for you have a corrupt nature." She then gave charge concerning her funeral, and after having added, "God will be with you, my child," fell, as it were, asleep in the arms of her daughter. Thus the Lord favoured her with an easy passage to the mansions of glory.

She departed this life, January 12th, 1734, in the 80th year of her age, and was interred at Saffron Walden, in Essex.

Eminent Christians, by Samuel James, M.A.

BOOK REVIEWS

John Calvin, by Simonetta Carr, illustrated by Emanuela Taglietti; quite large hardback; 63 pages; special price \$18; published by Reformation Heritage Books, 2965 Leonard St. N.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49525, U.S.A., and obtainable from some Christian bookshops (Ossett probably £15).

This is the first in a series of “Christian Biographies for Young Readers,” and we look forward expectantly to more. Well-written, nicely illustrated and beautifully compiled, this is an excellent book. We have not seen anything just like it for children. Intended for seven to ten year olds, it will be profitable for older readers.

The Soul of Life, edited and introduced by J.R. Beeke; paperback; 240 pages; special price \$7.50; published by Reformation Heritage Books.

This is a good introduction to Calvin’s writings for those who are unfamiliar with him. It consists of forty-five short passages from the writings of the great reformer – on almost every subject, but especially those concerning gracious experience and practical godliness.

At the beginning is a good, short life of John Calvin (1509-1564), followed by an appreciation of his work.

The Gospel as Taught by Calvin, by R.C. Reed; paperback; 148 pages; price £5.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

The publishers state that this is “a rare gem.” Written by R.C. Reed (1851-1925), a Presbyterian minister in America, it sets out the background of Calvinism and seeks to explain simply and clearly what Calvinism is. It is well-written in an easy, readable style.

On four of the “five points of Calvinism,” Dr. Reed is excellent. On particular redemption he is, to say the least, confused – arising from his belief (like many present-day professed Calvinists) that the death of Christ, though intended for the elect and applied only to the elect, is sufficient for all. We can never see how this equates with the vital doctrine of substitution (which must be for particular persons) and the clear, scriptural emphasis on the payment of a debt. No wonder that the author’s conclusion (page 81) is that the difference between the Calvinist and Arminian view of the atonement is “largely a difference touching words and names”!

Similarly the chapter on “the general love of God” seems out of place – but then is followed by an excellent chapter on the effects of Calvinism historically.

But there seems to be this contradiction right from the beginning when Dr. Reed strongly sets out the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism, stating (page 2) that the two systems are “poles apart” – but then soon afterwards writing that nowadays the middle wall of partition is broken down; they live together in peace and occupy one another’s pulpits.

Spiritual-Mindedness, by Dr. John Owen, abridged and made easy to read by R.J.K. Law; paperback; 249 pages; price £6; published by The Banner of Truth Trust.

We are delighted that there is the present-day renewed interest in the works of Dr. Owen and the continual demand for more to be published. We are not so sure, though, that it is possible to abridge Owen and make him “easy to read”! However, the thought behind the publication is to introduce Owen to those who would not normally read him. He has been styled “the prince of the Puritans,” but many find his works difficult to read.

The subject matter of the book is of great importance to the child of God. The text on which it is based is: “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8. 6). It is noticeable that in his writing here Dr. Owen uses more analogies and illustrations than usual – which helps immensely in the understanding.

Just how closely Dr. Law has kept to Owen we find it difficult to say. We wonder if, in places, he summarises and puts what Dr. Owen is writing in his own words. Having said this, this abridgement is profitable and obviously contains excellent things – so we hope it will be made a blessing; also that it may lead the reader on to some of John Owen’s original writings.

Let’s Study Matthew, by Mark E. Ross; paperback; 329 pages; price £9; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We shall ever be grateful to the Banner of Truth Trust for so many of its wonderful publications. We are thinking especially of the old divines, some of whose excellent works have previously been hidden in obscurity.

We can think of the commentaries we have: Bonar on Leviticus, Bridges on Proverbs, Durham on the Song of Solomon, Greenhill on Ezekiel, Moore on Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, Haldane on Romans, Manton on James and Jude, as well as a dozen or more by John Calvin.

It is right that the Holy Scriptures should be the foundation, but we feel that the “Let’s Study” series is very inferior to the works of the old writers. Mark E. Ross is a Professor of Theology in South Carolina, and there are some good things in his exposition of Matthew (though we think the “additional note” at the end would have been much better omitted). For the Gospel according to Matthew, though, we prefer J.C. Ryle and David Dickson and, of course, the well-known commentaries on the whole of Scripture: Gill, Henry and Poole.

Heroes, by Iain H. Murray; hardback; 303 pages; price £15; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This book contains seven chapters on “Christian heroes,” and a foreword explaining the meaning and use of the word “hero.” Five chapters deal with well-known figures – Jonathan Edwards, Whitefield, John Newton, Thomas Charles and Spurgeon; the other two concern little or unknown persons.

Heroes is completely different from *Stars in God’s Sky*, that we reviewed last month. It *does* give a short summary of each life – but the chapters are really an assessment and appraisal of that person’s work, or just some aspect of it. For instance, with George Whitefield the point is not his preaching but “George Whitefield and Christian Unity.”

Having a love for John Newton, we were specially interested in the chapter: “John Newton: A Wonder to Myself,” which we found especially good – well-written and most profitable.

Hope Strict Baptist Chapel, Stotfold – 150 years (1859-2009).

An interesting and well-illustrated booklet (44 pages) has been compiled by the present pastor, Mr. Graham Hadley, to commemorate the 150 years of the chapel's history. (See advert, wrapper page xi.)

WIT'S-END CORNER

"All their wisdom is swallowed up" (Psa. 107. 27, margin).

INQUIRY

Stand you at Wit's-end Corner,
 Christian with troubled brow?
 Think you on what's before you,
 And all you're bearing now?
 Seems all the world against you,
 And you must stand alone?
 Remember Wit's-end Corner
 Is where God's power is shown.

Stand you at Wit's-end Corner
 Blinded with wearing pain,
 Feeling you can't endure it,
 You cannot bear the strain?
 Bruised through the constant suffering,
 Dizzy and dazed and numb,
 Remember Wit's-end Corner
 Is where Christ loves to come.

Stand you at Wit's-end Corner,
 Your work before you spread,
 Begun, but all unfinished,
 Pressing on heart and head?
 Longing for strength to do it,
 Outstretching trembling hands?
 Behold, at Wit's-end Corner
 The Burden-bearer stands.

Stand you at Wit's-end Corner
 Yearning for those you love,
 Desiring, praying, watching,
 Pleading their cause above?
 Wouldst fain lead them to Jesus?
 Wouldst know if you've been true?
 He whispers at that Corner,
 "I'll win them, who won you."

Stand you at Wit's-end Corner?
 You're in the very spot
 To learn the wondrous wisdom
 Of Him who faileth not.

Maybe to brighter pathways
 Your feet will soon be moved;
 But only at that Corner
 The God of might is proved.

Unknown (altered)

ANSWER

Yes, oft at Wit's-end Corner
 I've proved that God is true ;
 For when bereft of wisdom,
 He's come and led me through.
 Not once in trouble only,
 But o'er and o'er again,
 I've found Him at that Corner,
 In sorrow, grief and pain.
 I've stood at Wit's-end Corner,
 And, wondering where to go,
 I've heard a voice behind me,
 Directing what to do.
 Then that which seemed so crooked
 Has all been made quite straight:
 When I'm at Wit's-end Corner
 God never comes too late.

And now when at that Corner
 I know no way to take,
 I look up straight to Jesus,
 Who saith, "I'll ne'er forsake."
 With rags and heavy burdens
 I fly to Him for rest;
 And then, at Wit's-end Corner,
 I lean upon His breast.

And more, at Wit's-end Corner,
 When sin and Satan press,
 His perfect law-fulfilling
 Becomes my glorious dress.
 And still while travelling onward,
 O may I keep in view
 That when at Wit's-end Corner,
 My God will bear me through!

L. W. (altered), March 1911
 From *Gospel Standard* 1911

How sweet is His smile in whose countenance heaven lieth!

Fleming

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
AUGUST 2009

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

CONSIDER!

A gracious consideration of the things of God is vital. On one occasion the Apostle Paul was writing about important things. Suddenly he stops: “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (2 Tim. 2. 7). The things of God are not to be passed over lightly.

In the Psalms we often have the word SELAH – stop, pause, think, consider! And the substance of the word SELAH will be written by the Spirit of God in the sinner’s heart. Satan does not like us to stop and think. He hates silence. And people do *not* stop to think and consider the things of God. But this solemn call is often repeated throughout Scripture: CONSIDER.

We can only refer to a few things.

1. CONSIDER YOUR LATTER END. Moses, in love to Israel not long before his death, exclaimed, “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!” (Deut. 32. 29). So the great question is asked: “How wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?” When the new birth takes place, the sinner is brought to stop and think of the day of his death. And what then?

“Stop, poor sinner, stop and think,
Before you further go;
Can you sport upon the brink
Of everlasting woe?”

2. CONSIDER YOUR WAYS. At the time of the rebuilding of the temple, God’s people were walking carelessly and disobediently, and the Lord sent His prophet Haggai with the clear message: “Consider your ways” (Hagg. 1. 5). And they did – in humble confession and repentance.

And so, led by the Spirit of God, we too would confess our sinful ways and depart from them, and be led to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness in the blood of Jesus. And we need to remember, not just at the beginning but throughout our lives: “Consider your ways.”

3. CONSIDER THE WONDROUS WORKS OF GOD. This exhortation was given to Job, and much of that remarkable book consists in contemplating God’s handiwork in creation. “Stand still, and consider the wondrous

works of God” (Job 37. 14). We need constantly to be reminded of the greatness of our God, His majesty and glory, that He is almighty, that He is our Creator. It will humble us, but it will be a strength in the day of adversity. Our God and Creator is the One who upholds us and who hears and answers our prayers.

There are many wondrous works of God. “But one strange work exceeds them all,” the work of redemption. In the “Psalm for the Sabbath day” we read: “O Lord, how great are Thy works!” but, “Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through *Thy work*,” the one great work that “exceeds them all.”

4. CONSIDER GOD’S PROVIDENCE. The Puritans strongly contended for watching God’s hand in providence – that He is in control, ordering all things after the counsel of His will, not only for His glory but for His people’s good.

So we have scriptures like this: “Consider the lilies of the field” – a loving rebuke to the anxieties of God’s people about how they shall manage in the unknown way. “Shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought” (Matt. 6. 28, 30, 31).

Or a scripture like this: “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider” (Eccl. 7. 14). There are many things to consider in the day of adversity – much cause for searching of heart, much need of prayer, much necessity to fall under the Lord’s chastening hand, but especially to remember that there is “a Brother born for adversity,” who sympathises and who hears and answers His people’s prayers.

Also the verse that comes before: “Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which He hath made crooked?” We are reminded of Thomas Boston’s *The Crook in the Lot*.

5. CONSIDER THE LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. Three times in the Epistle to the Hebrews does the apostle call us to consider Him.

“Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” (Heb. 3. 1).

“Consider how great this Man” (Heb. 7. 4).

“Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds” (Heb. 12. 3).

This is the most blessed consideration of all, the Lord and Saviour, not least in His glorious office as His people’s great High Priest. Once He offered the great sacrifice that did for sin atone. Now exalted, He sits at God’s right hand as the Mediator between a holy God and guilty sinners, and ever lives to intercede, almighty to save. It is His blessed suitability in His love and mercy that meets the sinner’s deepest need, and that is so attractive. “Unto you therefore that believe He is precious.”

In all this we need the gracious enabling of the Holy Spirit. It is He, and only He, who can give us this true spirit of gracious consideration. May the precious scripture be fulfilled: "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you."

* * *

Some years ago I was preaching at Zion Chapel, Leicester. The text I spoke from was Hebrews 12, verse 3: "For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." In the morning I spoke from just the two words: "Consider Him." I cannot remember anything of the service, or what I said.

In the afternoon I was asked to visit an elderly lady in hospital, an old member of Mr. Hazlerigg's. She was extremely deaf and moreover was in hospital because of ear trouble.

The old lady was very pleased to see me, but I could hardly get her to hear anything; I scarcely knew what to do. After a time she asked me what I had preached from in the morning. I took out a piece of paper and wrote on it just the two words: CONSIDER HIM. Sadly I left. I do not think I read or prayed as she could not hear.

I think it was on my next visit to Leicester a year later when she was out at chapel. She told me she had a most blessed afternoon after I left her twelve months before. She had spent the afternoon meditating on the two words: CONSIDER HIM.

How humbling this! And yet what a demonstration of the power of the Word when used by the Holy Spirit! "The Word of the Lord is not bound." She could not be at chapel. She did not hear the sermon. She did not know one thing that was said. And yet the text was made truly profitable to her.

How great is the sovereignty of God! And how true is His Word: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good"! The power is the Lord's.



The safety and perseverance of the redeemed is sweetly declared in the following delightful promise: "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32. 39, 40).

Thomas Reade

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

*Sermon preached by R.J. Morris at Zoar Chapel, Norwich,
on September 21st, 1950*

Text: “And He said, So is the kingdom, of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come” (Mark 4. 26-29).

I pray that it may be thus with me, that when the sickle of death cuts me down, it may be as an ear of corn fully ripe and garnered home to eternal glory. It is my prayer, my hope, and nothing else matters in comparison with that. To come at last as an ear of corn fully ripe and brought by divine grace to Him. Many a child, many an infant, has died like that. Many a young person fully ripe has the work of God finished in his heart and is meetened for everlasting peace. Thus the child shall die an hundred years old.

It is a great mercy if by divine grace there is a right beginning, a right growing, and a participating in that blessed harvest of God’s corn. I speak not of the tares, because you should know they are to be separated from the wheat and shall be burnt with unquenchable fire. And I daresay it has been a question with you sometimes: “Lord, may I not be among these tares. I seem to be of the wheat, yet in truth but a tare. Will my end be like theirs? Shall I come at last to that place where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched? But, Lord, save me by Thy grace, and make me to know it is Thine own precious work in my heart.”

My text speaks of the beginning. What a mysterious beginning there is with the corn! The farmer knows nothing about it. No, not with all his knowledge, with all the knowledge he has as an husbandman, with all his knowledge of cultivation and fertilization. My text says, “It springeth and groweth up, he knoweth not how.” So with the farmer; he knows not how that grain of wheat springs into life.

O the mystery of the beginning of a work of grace in a sinner’s heart! The Holy Ghost coming perhaps in a gradual way, convincing that sinner of his state, the prodigal coming to himself. That is just the way God brings the sinner. He brings him to himself; brings him to know something of his state as a sinner before God. He can never know it all, but God shows him something of it and teaches him to use the language of those oft-quoted lines:

“If I can therefore hardly bear
What in myself I see,
How very black must I appear,
Most holy God to Thee?”

“Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.” And that is the beginning, the beginning of that wondrous work of God which is to be to His praise in heaven for ever and ever. For these sinners are to stand there as monuments of His mercy, the conquest of His love, the trophies of His grace, for ever and ever.

The beginning is, as I have said, a sinner brought to feel his need of God’s mercy, made sorry for his sins. I mean repentance and brokenness of spirit. A sinner will never bring himself there. Sinful nature will never of itself repent before God. This repentance is God’s own gift. “Lord, I am sorry. How I have grieved Thee with my sin and transgression. Wilt Thou have mercy upon the greatest, chiefest of sinners?” All this work for the most part is hidden out of sight; others may see but little, if any, of it. Just as much as that grain of wheat begins, this little shoot upward sends its little root downwards under the surface of the ground, not where the eye of man can see it, not where the farmer can see it, but hidden there.

Let us hope then, please God, there may be that work begun in others which as yet we have not seen; and who can tell? It is a hidden work. Sometimes where God has wrought that work there is a determination, especially in young people, to hide it; will not have anyone know what is going on, will not have their godly parents know. But they turn aside to God in prayer for forgiveness. For the most part it is all so hidden.

The little shoot begins to go upward as distinct from those desires that have gone out to the world. “O,” says the sinner, “that I might find Him!” Here is that little, living shoot going upward, going heavenward, going Godward, going Christward.

“Jesus, engrave it on my heart,
That Thou the one thing needful art.”

Make me to feel that Thou art altogether needful to me. The affections begin to be set on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Here is a sinner whose desires begin to go upward, upward for mercy, upward for holiness, upward for grace, upward for forgiveness. Desires that do not go as once they did to the earth, but toward heaven. And these living desires in the soul, though he knows it not, betoken life, that life of God implanted which is never to die. Jesus says, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.” So it is with the grain of wheat.

Because there are new desires the sinner comes with his longings to the house of God. There is something he needs. We have come this way so we know well what we are speaking. He does not come to God’s

house now to be seen. I tell you that this quickened sinner comes up to the sanctuary of God with a longing heart. O that there might be something for my soul! Presently hope springs up: "Who can tell?" What a precious, living shoot that is! "Who can tell, since Jesus died to save the lost, perhaps He died for me." I can never tell you the sweetness of that little hope that rises to a poor sinner brought to the borders of despair. He begins to plead the promises and the invitations of the gospel. That little root begins to fix in Jesus Christ, willing to fix nowhere else. Does your little root go downward into Christ? "Lord, Thou art all my hope, all my salvation, all my trust; I have none beside." Thus the apostle says, "Rooted and built up in Him." Much of this solemn work is unseen by others because it is hidden.

God's work is glorious and honourable, and these things are to be to His praise for ever and ever in heaven. O how these sinners will bless God, how they will praise Him for all His wondrous love to them! You say there are sinners in heaven? Yes, they are not sinners now. They are sinners redeemed to God by the precious blood of Christ. No sin in them now, no guilt now. They are sinners whose sins have been washed away. Were they sinners? Yes, the worst and greatest of sinners. Is there hope then for me?

"Raise thy downcast eyes and see,
Numbers do His throne surround;
These were sinners once like thee,
But have full salvation found."

It is a mercy, dear friend, to be rooted in Christ, for your living faith to centre in Him in His obedience. He magnified the law and made it honourable in His sufferings and death. The holy, harmless Son of God in the flesh died for sinners. Nor can I begin to tell you all the sins that fell upon Him, the curse that was outpoured upon Him that sinners might live. That brought Him to this in His suffering: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It was because He bore all the punishment due to His people's sins.

"Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut its glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker died,
For man, the creature's sin."

When I dare to speak of these things, I feel two things: one is the insufficiency of my lips to speak them, and the other is the little I know of them. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Under the mighty power of God, this condemned sinner begins to put his faith and all his trust in a crucified Jesus. He begins to say with the apostle, "God forbid

that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." All his hopes centre there. He died that I might live; He lives that I might reign. I know that faith roots there, because God has showed it to me by blessed experience, and called me with the eye of faith to behold Jesus suffering and dying for me. I can never tell you how I felt. Like Peter, when on the Mount of Transfiguration wist not what he said, neither did I understand what I said on that occasion. I will tell you what it was. "This is the place to which I have longed to come, and now that I have found it I wish often to be here." I wist not what I said.

The next thing is that this hidden work begins to appear. So my text says, "First the blade." A very encouraging sight it must be for the farmer to go out in the late autumn or early spring and see his fields tinted with green, the springing up of the blade of wheat or corn. How glad he is to see that corn which he has sown in the earth springing up with the prospect of harvest! Does that work you were speaking of begin to be made manifest in a sinner? It does. You begin to see that his walk is different. He does not want to go where once he did. He is not after the same things as before, but different things. There is a wonderful change in his choice of company. It is now said, How glad he or she used to be in the company of the world, but now, would you believe it, they seem to like the company of the people of God. The work begins to be made manifest. Perhaps before there was such a wonderful knowledge of men and things, such a great knowledge of religion. Why, it seemed they knew all, and now, under God's teaching, they know nothing. You cannot help but remark on it. How that person has been brought down; he seems to be saying, "What must I do to be saved? Do you think there is hope for a sinner like me? Do you think the Lord will be gracious to me?"

Then this blade is very tender, a sinner made tender in God's fear. "So did not I, because of the fear of God." What a change! Able to do some things before, and now he says, "I cannot do it; by God's help I will not do it." Tender in love for the Scriptures, even though they may condemn you and seem at times to cut you off. Yet what a reverence, what a love there is to the Word of God! How you want to buy the truth and not sell it because the heart is tender. Tender in its affections to God's people. Perhaps in your heart you slighted them, despised them and said, "Poor people, it is their ignorance." You did not know that they were wiser than the wisest man from the university. But can you prove it? Yes, because these poor people are made wise unto salvation. That is the wisdom which an unregenerated sinner, however learned, knows nothing of.

These people have the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom. The heart is made tender towards the Lord's people. Ruth said,

“Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” That tender blade of grace springing up in her heart was seen in her love. She testified of it in her love to God’s people. In the tenderness of that love she said with tears still flowing from her eyes, “Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee.” Do not press it with me any more. O how she pleaded with her mother-in-law! “For thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” This little blade manifested that the love of God was there.

I do not know if you have ever thought of it, but when the fields are covered in the later part of the year, or early, according as it is winter or spring wheat, when the fields are covered with those blades, there is not one that could be made with the hand of man. But they are living, they are life, though very small. And here we see that which begins to testify that the life of God is there. There are marks and evidences that God has put that eternal life in the sinner’s heart. He did it for that poor woman at the well of Samaria, living in sin. He met her in His sovereign grace and mercy and brought her to hear His voice. He said, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.”

Before I pass on, I must notice this, that this blade is very small. Well, you say, what of that? Why, if there is a true work of grace, that sinner will be small in his own eyes, feeling unworthy that God should show such favours to him, feeling so little, so worthless, ready in the teaching of God’s Spirit to esteem others better than himself. Being brought into the church of God, he will not want to put the church right; he will want to take the lowest place there. And in all sincerity he will feel his littleness. This is the true blade of grass, the springing up and manifestation of God’s work in the sinner’s heart, that work which shall be to His eternal praise.

I may have told you before how that some years ago I besought the Lord with tears in the pulpit that He would bless His Word that night. O how I pleaded with Him, and this is what I asked Him for: that there might be that wrought amongst the people which should be to Him for a name, for an everlasting sign that should not be cut off. And God in His great kindness wonderfully answered my poor prayer, and brought a friend into the sweet liberty of the gospel. I met her later and I thought, Yes, your religion will never fail; you were given me in answer to my prayer. And your religion will be an everlasting sign in heaven, a sign of God’s infinite mercy and His boundless grace.

A blade of grace, and after that the ear. When the ear comes, there is a form that the blade has not got. The blade springs up in the field, but you do not know whether it is barley, whether it is wheat or oats. But when it comes in the ear, you see then if it is a field of wheat. It has got

a form to it, a shape to it. I believe it is so with God's people. Tried as they are, there is a secret hope in them that they are Christ's, from which they can never be moved. The winds of adversity may blow upon it, winds of temptation come, when it seems that the corn must be destroyed. But whilst the harvest may fail among men, God's harvest will never fail, never one of these blades shall perish. Though temptation come, the winds of trouble and adversity blow upon the grain, there is in the heart a precious, "Yes, it is well with me." There is a form, there is a shape, things are set. Some of you know what I mean. You wonder at times if all your hope is gone, but you know it is not so. Some grievous thoughts at times about yourself, but you know the hope is there, that you cannot give it up.

Blessed be God, the sun will shine upon this ear, even the Sun of Righteousness. The rains of doctrine will come upon the ear. Look at the rain that has come upon the harvest fields this season. I am sure of this, that God's doctrine will drop as the rain and distil as the dew. I feel conscious of that teaching every day. We know His teaching, His correction, His establishings, His encouragements. But depend upon it, if you are amongst the living grain, the rains of God's doctrine and teaching will come upon you. The wind of trials, difficulties, afflictions and temptation will all blow upon you. And sometimes it will seem as though everything is threatened. It is God's hand, His divine hand, ripening the grain for harvest. How you will bless Him one day for His mercy to you!

And lastly, the full corn in the ear, the work of grace brought to its end. Here it is mysterious. As the beginning was mysterious to us, even so how a person can be ripened. It does not always appear to be evident in some cases. It does sometimes in a child, sometimes in an old saint of God. It is so clear that God has ripened them; the sickle has been put in for the harvest is come. Blessed soul that has a part in that harvest, and all the things of earth are left behind, as they will be, for ever. To have Christ, the hope of heaven, to be glorified with Him for ever and ever. God grant it may be ours.

"Jesus, to Thee I breathe my prayer,
Reveal, confirm my interest there;
Whate'er my humble lot below,
This, this my soul desires to know."

It should be between a strong saint and a weak as it is between two lute-strings that are tuned to another; no sooner one is struck but the other trembles.

Thomas Brooks

GOD'S WORK OFTEN GRADUAL

Very dear Sir,

I make haste to answer your obliging favour of the 31st; the contents gave me much pleasure. I am glad to find that, though you have your share of trials in different ways, the Lord is pleased to support you under them and do you good by them. So I trust you shall find it to the end. That valuable promise, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass," intimates that we must not expect a path strewn with flowers or spread with carpets, but rather rough and thorny, otherwise such shoes would be unnecessary. But it is sufficient if strength is given according to our day, and if the Lord is pleased to be with us; though we should be led through fire and water, neither the flame shall kindle upon us, nor the floods drown us. His presence and love shall make us more than conquerors and bring us at length into a wealthy place.

Such a case as Mr.—'s, if it could be generally known and understood, would be more effectual than many volumes of arguments to confirm what the Scriptures teach concerning the Author, the nature and effects of that great change which must be wrought in the heart of a sinner before he can see the kingdom of God. His natural and acquired abilities were great; his moral character, as it is called, unblemished; he was beloved and admired by his friends, and perhaps had no enemies. To see such a man made willing in an instant to give up all his supposed advantages, to rank himself with the chief of sinners, and to glory only in those self-denying truths which a little before were foolishness to him, and to see him as suddenly possessed of a solid peace, reconciled to the thoughts of death, and rejoicing in a hope and a happiness of which he had, till then, not the least idea, is indeed wonderful.

But though such an instance bears the impression of the immediate finger of God no less evidently than the miracles wrought in Egypt, yet it cannot be perceived or understood in its full extent by any person whose mind has not been enlightened by the same divine influence. And I doubt not, but if the Lord had spared his life, he would by this time have been either pitied or scorned in the university as much as he had formerly been admired. I think you may be well assured, Sir, that the pleasure you feel and the tears you shed when you peruse the account, are the effects of your having yourself received the same Spirit.

I trust that your prayer that the Lord will be pleased to stretch out the arm of His mercy *in like manner* to you also shall be fully answered as to the main point; but it is by no means necessary that it should be just *in the like manner* as to the instantaneous and inexpressible clearness of the discovery. The Lord sometimes shows us how He can finish His work in a short time, and therefore some of the objects of His mercy do

not receive the light of His salvation till towards their last hours; but perhaps, if Mr. — had been appointed for life and usefulness in this world, he would have been taught these things in a more gradual manner.

The Lord compares the usual method of His grace to the growth of the corn, Mark 4. 26-29, which is perfected by a slow and almost imperceptible progress. The seed is hidden for a time in the soil, and when it appears, it passes through a succession of changes – the blade, the stalk, the ear, and it is brought forward amidst a variety of weather; the dew, the frost, the wind, the rain, the sun, all concur to advance its maturity, though some of these agents are contrary to each other, and some of them, perhaps, seem to threaten the life of the plant. Yet when the season of harvest returns, the corn is found ready for the sickle.

So is the work of grace in the soul; its beginnings are small, its growth for the most part slow, and to our apprehensions, often precarious: but there is this difference in the resemblance – frosts and blights, drought or floods, may possibly disappoint the husbandman's hope; but the great Husbandman of the church will not, cannot be disappointed. What *He sows* shall flourish in defiance of all opposition, and if it seems at times to fade, He can and He will revive it. This is His usual method; but He has not bound Himself by rules; and therefore, to show His manifold wisdom, He exhibits some peculiar cases, like that of our late friend, to quicken our attention, and to convince us that He is very near us, that His Word is truth, and that He can do what He pleases.

For the most part, His people are exercised with doubts and sharp temptations; for it is necessary they should learn not only what He can do for them, but how little they can do without Him. Therefore He teaches them not all at once, but by degrees, as they are able to bear it. I can say as you do, that I am much a stranger to those extraordinary manifestations of God in my soul; however, if the Lord has given us to see the necessity, the worth, the suitableness and wisdom of that method of salvation which is revealed in the gospel; if Christ is made precious and desirable to us, and we are willing to account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus the Lord; though there may be a difference in circumstances, the work is the same. And we have as good a right humbly to appropriate to ourselves the comfort of His promises as if an angel were sent from heaven (as to Daniel) to tell us that we are greatly beloved.

I am respectfully, dear Sir,

Your obedient and affectionate servant,

John Newton

June 12th, 1770.

SELF-EXAMINATION

From Heaven Taken by Storm by Thomas Watson

Self-examination is a duty of great importance. It is a parleying with one's own heart. "I commune with mine own heart" (Psa. 77. 6). David did put interrogatories to himself. Self-examination is the setting up a court in conscience and keeping a register there, that by a strict scrutiny a man may know how things stand between God and his own soul. Self-examination is a spiritual inquisition, a bringing one's self to trial. A good Christian doth as it were begin the day of judgment here in his own soul. Self-searching is a heart-anatomy. As a surgeon, when he makes a dissection in the body, discovers the intestina, the inward parts, the heart, liver, arteries, so a Christian anatomizeth himself. He searcheth what is flesh and what is spirit; what is sin and what grace. "My spirit made diligent search" (Psa. 77. 6). As the woman in the gospel did light a candle and search for her lost groat (Luke 15. 8), so conscience "is the candle of the Lord" (Prov. 20. 27). A Christian by the light of this candle must search his soul if he can find any grace there.

The rule by which a Christian must try himself is the Word of God. Fancy and opinion are false rules to go by. We must judge of our spiritual condition by the canon of Scripture. This David calls a "lamp unto his feet" (Psa. 119. 105). Let the Word be thy umpire to decide the controversy whether we have grace or not. We judge of colours by the sun; so we must judge of the estate of our souls by the light of Scripture.

Self-examination is a great duty incumbent; it requires self-excitation. It cannot possibly be done without offering violence to ourselves,

I. Because the duty in itself is difficult.

1. It is a work of self-reflection; it lies most with the heart. It is hard to look inward. External acts of religion are easy. To lift up the eye to heaven, to bow the knee, to read a prayer – this requires no more labour than for a papist to tell over his beads; but to examine a man's self, to turn in upon his own soul, to take the heart as a watch all in pieces and see what is defective – this is not easy. Reflective acts are hardest. The eye can see everything but itself. It is easy to spy the faults of others, but hard to find out our own.

2. Examination of a man's self is difficult because of self-love. As ignorance blinds, so self-love flatters. Every man is ready to think the best of himself. What Solomon saith of love to our neighbour is most true of self-love: it hides a multitude of evil (Prov. 10. 12). A man looking upon himself in the glass of self-love, his virtues appear greater than they are, and his sins less. Self-love makes one rather excuse what is amiss than examine it.

II. As examination is in itself difficult, so it is a work which we are very hardly brought to. That which causeth a backwardness to self-examination is:

1. Consciousness of guilt. Sin clamours inwardly, and men are loth to look into their hearts lest they should find that which should trouble them. It is little pleasure to read the handwriting on the wall of conscience. Many Christians are like tradesmen that are sinking in their estates. They are loth to look over their books or cast up their accounts lest they should find their estates low. So they are loth to look into their guilty hearts lest they should find something there which should affright them, as Moses was affrighted at the sight of the rod turned into a serpent.

2. Men are hardly brought to this duty because of foolish, presumptuous hopes: they fancy their estate to be good, and while they weigh themselves in the balance of presumption, they pass for current. Many take their salvation on trust. The foolish virgins thought they had oil in their lamps as well as the wise (Matt. 25). Some are not sure of their salvation, but secure. If one were to buy a piece of land, he would not take it upon trust, but examine the title. How confident are some of salvation, yet never examine their title to heaven.

3. Men are not forward to examine themselves because they rest in the good opinion of others. How vain is this! Alas! one may be gold and pearl in the eye of others, yet God may judge him reprobate silver. Others may think him a saint, and God may write him down in His black book. Judas was looked upon by the rest of the apostles as a true believer. They would have been ready to have given their hands to his certificate, yet he was a traitor. Standers-by can but see the outward carriage; they cannot tell what evil is in the heart. Fair streams may run on the top of a river, but vermin may lie at the bottom.

4. Men are hardly brought to examine themselves because they do not believe Scripture. The Scripture saith, "The heart is deceitful above all things" (Jer. 17. 9). Solomon said there were four things too wonderful for him, that he could not know (Prov. 30. 18, 19). He might have added a fifth: the way of man's heart. The heart is the greatest impostor. It will be ready to put one off with seeming grace, instead of saving. The heart will persuade that a slight tear is repentance, a lazy desire is faith. Now because the generality of people do not believe that there is such fallacy in their hearts, therefore they are so slow to examine them. This natural backwardness in us to self-reflection should cause us to offer the more violence to ourselves in making a thorough disquisition and search of our hearts.

O that I might prevail with Christians to take pains with themselves in this great work of examination! Their salvation depends on it. It is the

note of an harlot, she is seldom at home. "Her feet abide not in her house: now she is without, now in the streets" (Prov. 7. 11, 12). It is a sign of an harlot professor to be altogether abroad, spying the faults of others, but is never at home with his own heart. O let us try our hearts as we do gold by the touchstone! Let us examine our sins, and finding out this leaven, burn it. Let us examine our grace whether it be of the right kind. One went into the field to gather herbs, and he gathered wild gourds, and then death was in the pot (2 Kings 4. 40). So many think they have grace, the right herb, but it proves a wild gourd, and brings death and damnation. That we may offer violence to ourselves in this great business of examination, let these few things be seriously weighed:

i. Without self-examination we can never know how it is with us. If we should die presently, we cannot tell to what coast we should sail, whether to hell or heaven. It is reported of Socrates, when he was going out of the world, he had this speech, "I am now to die, and the gods know whether I shall be happy or miserable." That man who is ignorant of the state of his soul must needs have the trembling at the heart, as Cain had a shaking in his flesh. By a serious scrutiny of our hearts, we come to know to what prince we belong, whether to the "Prince of peace," or the "prince of the air."

ii. If we will not try ourselves, God will try us. He will examine us as the chief captain did Paul, "by scourging" (Acts 22. 24). He will ask that question as Christ, "Whose image and superscription is this?" And if we cannot show Him His own image, He will reject us.

iii. There is secret corruption within, which will never be found out but by searching. There are in the heart (as Austin [Augustine of Hippo] saith) hidden pollutions. When Pharaoh's steward accused Joseph's brethren of having the cup, they durst have sworn they had not the cup in their sack. Little doth a man know what atheism, pride and uncleanness is in his heart till he searcheth.

iv. The great advantage which will accrue to us: the benefit is great, which way soever things turn. If upon examination we find that we have not grace in truth, then the mistake is discovered, and the danger prevented. If we find that we have grace, we may take the comfort of it. How glad was he that had "found the pearl of great price"! He that upon search finds that he has but the least degree of grace is like one that hath found his box of evidences; he is heir to all the promises and in a state of salvation.

And that we may go on the more successfully in this work, let us desire God to help us to find out our hearts. "That which I see not teach Thou me" (Job 34. 32). Lord, take off the veil; show me my heart; let me not perish through mistake, or go to hell with hope of heaven.

SEASONABLE WORDS

A letter from an old minister to a young believer

My dear unknown but Christian Friend,

I have received your kind, encouraging letter this morning, and I hasten to send you a few lines in reply.

It always affords me pleasure to hear of the Lord's blessing upon His people, whether it be in calling or establishing their souls; and especially am I glad to know that the Word of the Lord, through my sinful lips, should be carried with power into the heart of any of His dear people. Ministers often labour in fear and weakness, and are often tried about the unfruitfulness of their message; and perhaps it is wisely hid from them where it takes effect.

I am glad to hear that you have been able to cast in your lot with the church at Providence. I know your pastor, and I have no doubt about his ministry. I hope you will be an attentive hearer, and often profit under the Word from his mouth.

It appears you are but young in years. I may just say that if your life is spared, you will have many temptations and trials to endure before you reach Immanuel's land. I hope you will value the throne of grace and often be found in secret prayer and careful reading of the Word of God, and that you may daily grow in knowledge of yourself as a sinner and of Christ as a Saviour, a knowledge of your own weakness and of Christ's sufficient strength.

Hate sin! Flee from sin! Sue for pardon, peace, justification and communion with God through atoning blood. Try to live and walk in the fear of God, but never trust in your own righteousness. May you be favoured with frequent helps and gracious touches from the Holy Ghost, and wait patiently at Wisdom's doors under all desertions and darkneses. The Lord tries every grace He gives, and chastens every son whom He receives, but He never leaves nor forsakes the work of His own hands.

I hope you may be a help and a comfort to your dear pastor and to the church of God. Thanking you for writing to me. I remain,

Yours in Christian love,

Robert Moxon

Bury, May 1st, 1905.

There are times and cases when a Christian would not be willing that the dearest and most intimate friend he hath in the world should be privy to what passes betwixt him and his God.

John Flavel

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Sermon preached by John Cennick (1718-1755). Cennick was the author of several of our hymns. Dallimore, in his life of Whitefield, says of Cennick: "He was not only one of the greatest preachers of the eighteenth century Revival, but also one of the greatest saints."

Text: "I am the good Shepherd" (John 10. 14).

Whoever is acquainted with the Scriptures knows that in all ages the Lord has been called the Shepherd of His people, and His church has constantly been looked upon as His flock. "He made His own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock." He led them "like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." This was said of Him of old: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." And again, "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered.... I will feed them in a good pasture ... there shall they lie in a good fold.... I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God."

In the days of Israel's journey through the desert, they were indeed led like sheep, and the tender care of God over them was like that of a shepherd; and their whole journey from Egypt to Canaan became, like the rest of the Jewish economy, a shadow of some better thing, namely, the Saviour's pastoral care over poor sinners, who from the time of their leaving the Garden of Eden had wandered like sheep in the wide world and were lost. "All we like sheep had gone astray; we had turned every one to his own way." Then the Lord humbled Himself to be the Shepherd and sought us out, according to the prophecies which I have mentioned. And as He brought out His chosen people and Israel His elect from their bondage in Egypt like a flock, with a high hand and with a stretched-out arm, so did He find us groaning under the iron yoke of sin, and bondsmen to Satan, when He came into our spiritual Egypt, where He also was crucified (Rev. 11. 8); and there, with His hands stretched out, He obtained and wrought our deliverance, and like a good shepherd laid down His life for His sheep; and now He has His church like a flock, who are following their Shepherd, and returning out of all countries and places back to Mount Zion with everlasting joy upon their heads; and though all do not go up in the same company, nor perhaps will till the last days, yet all believers are but one fold and under one Shepherd.

The time would fail me to speak much of His tender dealings with His ancient people; how He watched them and led them as a Shepherd,

nor over-drove His flock, nor suffered them to mingle with others, but was round about them with His everlasting arms like a wall of fire, to make them lie down and rest safely; nor how He fed them from above with manna, and clave and dug springs for them in the rock, of which Moses and the Psalms are full. But I will mention something of David, who was one of the chief types of Christ, and by whose name (to signify He should be his very flesh and blood) our Saviour is so frequently called in the prophets.

David was once a shepherd, as Moses had been, before God took him from watching the ewes to lead His people, and both these shepherds had perhaps learned in their office with their flocks many things necessary for their higher office when they became shepherds of God's own purchased flock, the souls of men. In David this especially was remarkable, that when he was keeping his father's sheep, there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. Now he did not flee in the time of danger, nor slight the loss because it was but a lamb (for he might have thought, it is but one, and it is better twenty lambs be carried away than I risk my life, but he thought otherwise). No, he pursued the lion and the bear, and when they rose against him, he slew them, and took the lamb away, and brought it back safe. Herein his regard for his sheep, his care of his father's flock, and his bravery were evident, and this made him a lively picture of God and of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this manner our Saviour in a certain parable (Luke 15) speaks of salvation. He saith, A shepherd who had an hundred sheep, and lost one, left the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and went out to seek that he had lost, and did not end his search or give up his care and return till he had found it; and then he laid it upon his shoulders and brought it home rejoicing. Afterwards he acquainted all his friends and neighbours of it, namely, that he had found the sheep that he had lost, and was more glad about that one than of all the rest that went not astray. This He spake of Himself; for He is that good Shepherd who kept His Father's innumerable flocks, and when the devil like a roaring lion had seized one, namely, the human race – which, however great in our eyes, to Him must be only like one lamb out of a hundred, and less, since all the nations of the earth to Him are like a drop of the bucket – He did not think, It is only one lamb, it is but one world, I can make many with speaking a word; nor did He slight His loss and let it pass unheeded, as if it were far better for ten thousand worlds to perish than to venture His life and undergo pain and danger.

No, He arose from His everlasting throne willingly, and so infinitely He valued us, so faithful was He to His Father's flock, and so tender and loving to us who were lost, that He left all the worlds above, parted as it were with the ninety and nine, and came a far journey. And when He

had found us, we were in the mouth of the lion and in the paw of the bear, torn, and polluted, and spoiled, and not worth His notice. Yet He attacked the enemy, and in righteousness made war. He wrestled “till His sweat was like great drops of blood falling down to the ground”; nor did He give over till He had no whole part, from the crown of His head to the sole of His foot, but was bruised and sore smitten in body and soul. Nor yet did He yield till in His last dying pangs He caught the bear, death, as it were by the beard, and slew him. And as He poured out His soul, He trod with such violence on the lion and the dragon that had deceived the nations so long that He gave up His prey, and our Shepherd cried out for joy, “It is finished!” Immediately He took a part of His spoil (the soul of one of the thieves) with Him into paradise, and bade all His angels and saints rejoice with Him, for now, saith He, “I have found that which I had lost.”

Yea, He rejoiced more, and there was more joy in heaven among the angels of God over this redemption, this saving His lost sheep, than over all the rest of His vast, eternal creation beside. All the heavens from that time to this ring with it: “Now is come salvation! Now the kingdoms of the earth are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.” Thus has He merited that great name among His churches, “The good Shepherd that giveth His life for the sheep.”

It will be proper now to speak of the sheep whom this Shepherd has redeemed, of the fold in which they enter and are kept, and in what manner they are gathered and brought home to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. And this I will do first of all, and then speak of some other things in this chapter out of which I have chosen my text.

In the Fall, all have been so ruined and spoiled, and have so lost their first nature, that none properly can be called sheep but such as are restored and washed again and healed by the Shepherd of Israel. Somewhat of the nature of sheep we all have, namely, an inclination to wander, and being easily frightened, and driven further and further from our right place. As sheep, when one at their head breaks bounds and goes astray, all the rest follow, so have we done from our youth up: “We have erred and strayed from His ways like lost sheep.” But the innocent and harmless nature, the love to the Shepherd, and other good qualities, we have not till our nature is changed by the Holy Ghost.

Those called by our Saviour, “His sheep,” are believers, people who follow Him, who hear His voice, who know Him, on whom is His mark, who enter the fold by Him, and to whom He gives eternal life. “They hear His voice.” Although all the children of God love the Scriptures, and hear joyfully the preaching of the gospel, yet this is not what our good Shepherd means. Many heard Him in the days of His flesh, as Herod heard John gladly, who nevertheless, as He tells them, did not hear His voice. To hear His voice is to have Him speak to our hearts and

awaken us out of our dead and carnal state, as it is written, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ... and live."

He teaches them that they are lost and undone, so that they confess it from a certain knowledge and feeling of it inwardly, and no man can persuade them it is not so. Should we try to convince them that they are not so bad, or in a lost or dangerous condition by nature, it would be to them the voice of a stranger; they would not follow it, for they hear not the voice of strangers (John 10. 5). But neither is this all, for they hear the voice of their Beloved. He who seemed to speak roughly, like Joseph to his brethren when he awoke them out of their sinful sleep, He also speaks comfortably like him, and falls on their neck and kisses them. He speaks in the right time, in the time of love, and calls them, saying, Ye are Mine, your sins are forgiven. From the time that we live through faith in Him, we hear His voice, we understand His mind; He writes it in our hearts, and there speaks and communes with us, and he who is a stranger to this must not imagine himself of the sheepfold of Jesus Christ.

His sheep follow Him. "He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him." This is part of the parable with which our Saviour began this discourse, and is not so easy to be understood by people in our nation, because with us it is seldom seen that the shepherd goes before his sheep, but generally after them, whereas in the east the shepherds go before their flocks. And in other countries, where there are wolves and beasts of prey, the shepherd watches his flock all night, and is continually with them, and so familiar that the sheep naturally keep near him, and should he go forward, they do so too, or does he stop, so do they. This the shepherds teach the sheep to do, so that without driving they can lead their herds in and out of the fold, and into the pastures easily.

Jesus has taught His sheep this lesson. He has so watched over His flock, that as Jacob said once, the drought consumed him by day, and the frost by night, when he watched his father Laban's flocks, so is it true of the Good Shepherd. He has laid down His life to save theirs, and has not behaved like an hireling, who flees when he sees a wolf coming, but He has been their Saviour, and they love Him, and His life becomes an example to them that they may tread in His footsteps. They are of a tender conscience and afraid to do anything without the Shepherd; they walk where He walked, and go out after Him bearing His reproach; and as He was, so are they, like lambs among wolves in this world. "They follow Him." Natural men can see, and must own, that they are followers of the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. They cannot live impure, or careless, or sinful lives. The Shepherd did not go that road; neither will they.

They know Him. "I know my sheep," He saith, "and am known of Mine." They have obtained like precious faith with the saints gone

before, and have the Spirit of Christ in them. They know who Jesus is, they are not afraid to call Him Lord; they have experienced His almighty power and salvation, and know in whom they believe. He is their own dear God and Saviour and His eternal life is theirs. This He gives to all believers: "He that believeth ... hath everlasting life"; "and this is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God." All His people know Him, from the least of them to the greatest of them. This high attainment, this blessed length to which they have arrived, so as to be acquainted with God and be at peace with Him, has not been through any deep study, or uncommon knowledge, or parts, or learning in them (for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light, and babes and little children is the name our Saviour gives them), but it is given to them from above; they have been taught it of God. Jesus has manifested Himself to them.

His mark is upon them; His name is upon their foreheads. As a shepherd when he has found his lost sheep puts his name and mark upon them, so does the great Shepherd of the sheep; but it is the secret of God, the new name written, which no man knoweth saving him that receiveth it. They have a secret, inward assurance that the Beloved has sealed them, and that their names are graven upon His hands and set as a seal upon His arm. Of this the Holy Ghost is witness to them, and they being sealed to the day of redemption, rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. No man can pluck them out of the Shepherd's hands. He has charged every destroying angel, Come not near those men on whom is My mark. The blood of sprinkling is upon their door-posts; the destroyer must pass by and do them no harm. This keeps them a quiet and peaceable people; this comforts them amidst many misfortunes and troubles. Surely, can they say, I am the Lord's; His name is upon me.

They enter into the sheepfold by Christ. They know how they came among the children of God. They were not born so; they did not come in by having had Abraham to their father, nor did they merit it by their holy life or purchase it with their alms, but by means of Jesus Christ they entered in. He opened His arms, and they took refuge there. He set open the fountain, and they washed there. The veil of His flesh was rent, and they escaped by that new and living way. Had not He stood their Friend, they had continued without, among the dogs, and the fearful and unbelieving to this day. He became an open Door to them, and they entered in, and were saved by Him.

He gives them eternal life. This is to know Him, and the very life He lived, the very eternal life He has (who was dead and dies no more), they have also, and shall never die. Their wearied bodies may lie down in the chambers of the grave and upon the bed where He lay, but further hurt they shall not, they cannot sustain. Their souls cannot die; they cannot taste of death. No bitterness or sting of death shall grieve or

trouble them at their departure. They shall live in time and in eternity; because Christ, who is their life, lives, therefore shall they live also.

I shall now speak of the sheepfold, where the Shepherd causes His sheep to lie down at noon, as Solomon speaks, or where they dwell safely. This is the church of God, for though others have always mingled with His people, and perhaps every visible flock or congregation is a mixed company, yet He has a fold invisibly. His arms surround His flock, and as the hills stand round about Jerusalem, so the Lord standeth round about His people, from this time forth for evermore. He that knows the number of the stars and calleth them all by their names, knows His sheep, and in the day when He counts up His jewels, He will spare them as a man spares his son that serves him. He leads them often into green pastures and feasts them upon the hidden manna. They discern the Lord's body, and partake of the blessings of the sanctuary, and drink of that river which makes glad the city of God. Though others do not know them or who they are, yet they know, and when any danger is nigh they hasten into the fold, and lie down in the arms of the Shepherd, whose out-stretched hands encompass them, and all around wait the ministering spirits, the armies of the Lord of hosts.

Shepherds there are also under the chief Shepherd, who are not hirelings, but who feed the flock which He purchased with His own blood. These minister within the fold, and watch and help the flock, till the Shepherd eases them of their office, and suffers them to enter where the mixed multitude are no more, but all are sheep round about their Shepherd.

The general way in which the Shepherd gathers His flock is by the preaching of His gospel, but herein the Holy Spirit is the chief, if not the only Minister, and is not confined to any means. He draws and selects, out of all lands and nations, souls for our Saviour. He gives them ears to hear His voice. He makes them a willing people in the day of His power, and leads them obediently to follow the Lamb. He manifests and reveals Christ and His love to them, so that they know Him. He sets His mark upon their foreheads and seals them to the day of redemption. He directs poor, distressed and miserable people to enter in by Jesus and be saved, and it is He that inspires them with life eternal.

But beside all that I have said, this must be observed, that there is no way to become a child of God or to enter His sheepfold, but by the Door – Christ. Whoever attempt to make themselves righteous, or to attain salvation, or to go to heaven by any other means, are like such as enter not the house by the door, but break in some other way, and are thieves and robbers; and so shall God treat all such as strive by other means to come to Him.

Again, we must beware of such men as our Saviour calls hirelings, while they care not for the sheep, but feed themselves and not the flock.

Yet we have a good Shepherd to whom we can apply safely, one who laid down His life for the sheep. And while some are hirelings, let us not despise the holy office of labourers in God's vineyard, but let us count them worthy of double honour who rule well, and cleave closer to our only High Priest and Pastor, Jesus, and put no confidence in any other.

Again, there is yet another doctrine to be mentioned, and that is that our good Shepherd laid down His life willingly. He was not obliged or forced. "He had power to lay it down," or, if He pleased, "He had power to take it again." The offering Himself to die for His people, and desiring the sword to smite Him, the Shepherd, for the sheep that were scattered, was His free love. He was a free-will offering. His mercy only led Him on, and therefore does His Father love Him, therefore do His sheep love Him, and shall for ever and ever.

But now how happy must they be who have a part in His favour, who are His people and the sheep of His pasture! How safe who have His Father to take care that no man pluck them out of His hands! What a great mercy is it that He welcomes sinners into this grace, and has spoken His parables with this view, that lost men might turn to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, and be numbered with His saints in glory everlasting!

May you all, my dear brethren and sisters, be made wise and join with the little flock over which He is the universal Overseer, and only Head and Lord, and obtain of Him the assurance and confidence that the Lord is your Shepherd, so shall ye not want. To Him be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

GOD IN CONTROL

By Thomas Boston (1677-1732)

It is evident from the Scripture doctrine of *divine providence* that God brings about every man's lot and all the parts thereof. He sits at the helm of human affairs, and turns them about whithersoever He listeth, "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven and in earth, in the seas and all deep places" (Psa. 135. 6).

There is not anything whatsoever befalls us without His overruling hand. The same providence that brought us out of the womb bringeth us to, and fixeth us in, the condition and place allotted for us by Him who hath determined the times and the bounds of our habitation (Acts 17. 26). It overrules the smallest and most casual things about us, such as hairs of our head falling on the ground (Matt. 10. 29, 30); a lot cast into the lap (Prov. 16. 33). Yea, the free acts of our will, whereby we choose for ourselves for, even "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water" (Prov. 21. 1).

And the whole steps we make, and which others make in reference to us; for "the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10. 23). And this, whether these steps causing the crook to be deliberate and sinful ones, such as Joseph's brethren selling him into Egypt, or whether they be undesigned, such as manslaughter purely casual, as when one hewing wood kills his neighbour with the head of the axe slipping from the helve (Deut. 19. 5). For there is a holy and wise providence that governs the sinful and the heedless actions of men, as a rider doth a lame horse, of whose halting not he, but the horse's own lameness, is the true and proper cause; wherefore in the former of these cases God is said to have sent Joseph into Egypt (Gen. 45. 7) and in the latter, to deliver one into his neighbour's hand (Exod. 21. 13).

WILLIAM CROUCH

By "W.B., Brighton"

In the month of February 1861, the Lord, in a mysterious manner, removed from the church below William Crouch, who for more than forty years was a faithful witness for the truth at Pell Green, Wadhurst, in the county of Sussex; and the following particulars have been gathered up concerning him chiefly from the lips of his widow, who, after a union of nearly fifty years, still survives to mourn her loss.

He was born in the year 1790. His father was a small farmer in Sussex, and had been married three times; and as William was of the third family, his father could not do much for him in a worldly point of view. He lost this parent when very young, and at the early age of twelve years he went forth to get his living by farm labour. In the providence of God he worked on the same farm with David Fenner, now known to many as an old and faithful minister of Christ at Hastings [for fifty years: 1818-1868]; and they lived together.

A report had gone abroad that David Fenner was converted. This caused no small stir in the neighbourhood, for a religious profession was not so common in those days as it is now. William Crouch wondered what this conversion could mean, and thought he would ask Fenner about it. This led to a conversation which left a deep impression on his mind, for Fenner declared what God had done for his soul, and opened up to him the feelings and exercises of his mind. All this was at that time strange to Crouch; and though he could not then understand what he heard, yet he never afterwards totally forgot it. The word was fastened on his conscience as a nail in a sure place. The seed then cast upon the

waters was found after many days. At the age of thirteen he was apprenticed to a tailor at Mayfield.

“Now came the period, known to God,
When this poor sheep, redeemed by blood,
Should leave the hateful ways of sin,
Turn to the fold, and enter in.”

It was in the year 1809 he was effectually stopped by the grace of God. He heard a sermon from Romans 8. 1: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” This text, not the sermon itself, was the means of enlightening his conscience and showing him his lost condition. The law was applied with power, and he was convinced of sin, and made to tremble at the thought of the judgment to come. Once when he was playing at cricket, he was so distressed he did not know what to do; he felt he could play no more, and threw himself on the ground bemoaning his miserable case. On his way home he was tempted to enter a public house, and was induced to play at ninepins. While thus engaged, he was seized with an agony of remorse, and went home and shut himself in, walking up and down the house for three or four hours, concluding all was over, he must be for ever lost, and that there could be no hope for him. This occurred when he was nineteen years of age.

The first word which was ever blessed to him in a way of comfort and which raised a hope in his soul was that precious declaration of 1 John 1. 7: “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” He was at that time telling out the feelings and exercises of his soul to a very old man, who quoted the above passage to him. He now wanted food for his poor soul, and went to hear where he thought the gospel was preached. There were some Baptists in the neighbourhood, and he went amongst them, and used to engage in prayer at their meetings. At that time he was under the influence of a self-righteous spirit, and fondly imagined he should get better and better. Instead of this he felt worse and worse. God was teaching him the plague of his heart, and breaking up the fountains of that great deep.

About this time he went to London, where the Lord in mercy again revived him and blessed him in measure, so that he was “holpen with a little help,” though not brought out into the liberty of the gospel. While he was living in London he had a great desire to hear Mr. Huntington; but he never did, as he gave ear to the warnings he received against both him and his hearers as being such a “bad-spirited people.”

On his return into the country, he was baptized by a minister at Rotherfield. He was much exercised on the subject of preaching, and one day an old man repeated to him these words: “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren.” He enquired of this

friend if he had any particular motive in addressing those words to him. He answered, Yes, he had; for he thought Mr. Crouch was called, or would be called, to the work of the ministry. One day these words were applied with some degree of power: "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing" (Luke 22. 35). At another time the following portion was much on his mind: "The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance of thy maidens" (Prov. 27. 26, 27). These words were a great encouragement to him to hope that the matter was of the Lord.

But, alas ! he had some painful lessons to learn first. He must go into the furnace; as it is written: "He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering of righteousness" (Mal. 3. 3). And like poor Peter, he must be sifted in the devil's sieve before he is sent to strengthen his brethren. He fell into a grievous state of backsliding and plunged into the world, forsaking the public ordinances of God's house altogether. He had gone into the bread-baking business, and was in the practice of making gingerbread to serve those who attended the various fairs in the neighbourhood, and this worldly connexion was a snare to him. Thus he became like Ephraim: "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people" (Hos. 7. 8).

But God in mercy to his soul spread His net upon him, and brought him down, and chastised him (verse 12). A sense of guilt overwhelmed him, and he sank as in deep mire, where there is no standing. In the bitterness of his soul, he walked up and down, wishing he had never made a profession, and wringing his hands in an agony of grief and remorse. He felt and fell under the truth of Jeremiah's words: "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when He led thee by the way?" And again: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God."

In this state of mind he one day began to read Huntington's *Justification of a Sinner, and Satan's Lawsuit with him*. This discourse was greatly blessed to him, and he again went to hear the preached word. On one occasion, as he was hearing Mr. Pitcher [see G.S. 2007, page 151], the Lord broke in upon his soul, and melted him down under a sense of matchless love and mercy. He could not help speaking of it as he went home, saying the Lord had met with him, and with what light, love and power the word had been accompanied. He longed to get to his bedroom, that he might give vent to his feelings and pour out his heart to

God. Arriving at home, he asked his wife to come with him upstairs, when they both fell upon their knees, and he began to pour out his soul to the Lord. Melted down in his feelings, he pleaded and begged the dear Lord would seal the blessing upon his heart, when all of a sudden the words came with sweetness and power: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Thus was he, like Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord. This blessed visit lasted eight days, and during the whole of that time he walked with God, without the shadow of a doubt of his interest in covenant love.

After this he felt preaching again laid on his mind. He said it was like a fire in his bones, as the prophet expresses himself: "But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay" (Jer. 20. 9). One day he said to his wife, "My dear, should you have any objection to our opening our house for preaching?" She answered, "No, I should have no objection." So he went to a friend who was a carpenter, and enquired what would be the price of a few stools. His friend asked him what he wanted them for; was it that he intended preaching? "Because," said he, "I and my wife have had thoughts of asking you to preach in our kitchen."

This was agreed to, and about twelve in number first met together. But the Word of God grew and multiplied. The kitchen soon filled; then the workshop adjoining. People came from a distance, and it was with this little company in the kitchen as with the church at Thessalonica, the gospel came not unto them in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. The first text he preached from in the house was from Zechariah 9. 11: "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." Under this sermon, Mrs. Kemp, who had been in bondage for eight years, was brought forth into the light and liberty of the gospel. It was about this period that the church was formed, as it has remained to this day, on Strict Baptist principles.

At length his friend the carpenter, Mr. T. Kemp, who is now the oldest deacon at Pell Green, said he thought of beginning to build a chapel, and for that purpose he was willing to give the ground. He said he felt a persuasion that the Lord would bless it. Accordingly they went and marked out the site for the foundation, and thus the building of the chapel at Pell Green, Wadhurst, was commenced. Before this, Crouch had begun to speak at Burwash, also at Ninfield, where the Word was much blessed, and several who were advanced in years were brought to a knowledge of the truth. For many years he continued to preach one Lord's day in each month at Ninfield.

The friends wished him to give up his worldly business, feeling persuaded that the Lord would provide for him and his family. Mr. Kemp built him a cottage to live in rent free, and wished him to come at once and settle down amongst them as their stated pastor. It was not, however, until after the lapse of two years that he was enabled to see his way clear to give up his business and take up his abode at Pell Green. His scruples were then removed, and he took the important step from feeling this word much impressed on his mind: "Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours." Two days afterwards, a friend brought him as a present a leg of mutton, when his wife called to him, and said, "The Lord has sent us some of the good things of Egypt!" He answered her, "Yes, my dear, the Lord has called me to the work, and He will provide for me."

Once about this time, he was called upon to go out to preach at a place a considerable distance from his house, and a kind friend of his, a Mr. Duck, offered to lend him his horse, that he might ride; but this he declined without giving the reason, the fact being he had not money to pay the toll-gates.* While, he was on this journey, his wife felt much cast down in her mind. One day two friends of his called to see her. In the course of conversation, they told her that they had been to a draper's shop, making some purchases. Mrs. C. said she very much wanted a dress, and mentioned what colour she should prefer. While they were talking, Mr. C. came home and put down a parcel, saying, as he smiled and looked at his wife, "There is something for you." It was a new gown, of the very kind and colour she had been wishing for. But this was not all. He afterwards showed her two sovereigns, which so completely overpowered her feelings that she went upstairs to weep at the Lord's goodness.

The chapel was built in the year 1824. Some time ago the debt had been reduced to £131, when Mr. Kemp said if the friends would raise £100 he would give the remainder. The sum of £95 was collected, and he said that would do; he was willing to give the rest; and thus the chapel was freed from debt. For many years the Lord blessed Mr. C.'s labours abundantly, and several young persons were brought to a knowledge of the truth under his ministry, some of whom are now living.**

Mr. Crouch had a large family of children, and as his immediate friends are aware, he had many grievous trials connected therewith.

* If on foot, there was no charge passing through the toll-gates, which at that time were found throughout the country on the new "turnpike roads."

** William Crouch always baptized in the open air in a pond at the back of Pell Green Farm House. One of those he baptized was John Grace, the well-known and much-loved minister at Brighton.

Three of his children were removed by death almost at the same time, and one of them, a daughter, gave satisfactory evidence of being a partaker of grace.

We now pass on to the close of his pilgrimage. It was remarked that during the last two years of his life he was more than usually retired, being much alone in his study, and also deeply impressed with the subject of death. We may here notice that in the course of his ministerial labours, he had many times been remarkably preserved by the kind providence of God. No fewer than thirty times he had been exposed to danger by horses falling with him, or by his being thrown out of conveyances, and yet his life had been spared.

But the time of his departure was at hand. On January 6th he preached at Ninfield, and at Battle, near Hastings, in the evening. On Monday the 7th, he intended to return by the railway, but a friend, travelling in a confectioner's light van, offered to take him, and he accepted the invitation. They had arrived within a quarter of a mile of the place where he purposed to alight, when the fore wheel of the conveyance came off, and Mr. Crouch was violently thrown out. He was stunned by the concussion, and when taken to the nearest house was quite insensible. His face was bathed with water, and some brandy was administered, after which he revived.

On being removed to his own house, the surgeon who attended him found that the small bone of his arm was broken. During the week he suffered much pain in the fractured limb, but it was with difficulty he was prevented from preaching on the next Lord's day, although he said, "I don't know but what this may be the death of me even now." He spent a great part of the night sitting up in bed, and when his dear wife would say, "You must be tired with sitting up so much," he would reply, "No, I have such communion with the Lord, it makes up for it."

His arm appeared to be going on well, and on Lord's day, January 20th, he preached twice. On the following Lord's day, the 27th, he again preached twice, his text both morning and afternoon being Ephesians 5. 18: "But be filled with the Spirit." While speaking in the afternoon he suddenly stopped for a minute or two, and then resumed his discourse. In explanation of this, he afterwards said he felt as if something dropped in his chest. It was altogether a remarkable time both with himself and his hearers. He said he felt that his heart was so full of the love of God that he wanted words to express it. Some of the friends remarked, when they came out of the chapel, they thought it was his last sermon, for he seemed to have resigned himself, the church and the people into the hands of God.

On Monday he was very comfortable, and also on Tuesday, until after tea; it was then discovered that his arm was much swollen. On the

Wednesday morning, when his wife went to dress him, he was seized with a shivering fit and went down to the fire. He continued poorly in body all this day, and felt rather dark in his mind till he went to bed, as it proved, for the last time, for he never came down again alive. On Thursday, he appeared quiet and composed, as if he felt he was in the Lord's hand and had done with all things here below. On Friday morning, a woman, one of the friends, came in, and his wife asked him, "Do you know who that is?" He said, "Yes; poor, dear, little broken-hearted woman, God will appear for you. You will never die till God has shown you His salvation."

On Saturday morning he said, "No terrors, no horrors. They are all done away in Christ." In the afternoon he pulled aside the bedcurtain, and looking at Mr. Huntington's portrait which hung on the wall, he said, "Dear, good old man, I shall soon be with you." His poor wife was much distressed, and said, "What shall I do when you are gone?" He said, "Stick fast to your colours; God will provide you friends. It will not be long, and then, like me, you will have all." At night his son Jacob came to see him; and when asked if he knew him, said, "Yes; Jacob. But I am a true Jacob, bowed down with old age, but blessed of my God."

On Lord's day, February 3rd, his son-in-law had a sweet conversation with him in the morning. At one time he said, looking at his wife, "Jordan!" She said, "Yes; you are about to enter Jordan, but the waters will part, and you will go over dryshod." In the afternoon he looked up, and said to a friend who had called to see him,

"God from everlasting be blest, and again
Blest to everlasting. Amen and Amen."

This he repeated several times. In the course of the evening some of the dear friends came in to see him. He said he knew them, but spoke little. He appeared to be in a sweet frame of soul, and to have done with the things of time and sense. In the night he repeated the lines:

"Hark! they whisper. Angels say,
Sister spirit, come away."

Many sweet words dropped from his lips; amongst which were the following: "Why tarry in this poor, fettering clay? Happy, happy, happy!" and he also repeated this verse from one of Swain's hymns:

"When Jesus thus invites me in,
How will the heavenly hosts begin
To own their new relation?
Come in, come in! The blissful sound
From every tongue will echo round,
Till all the crystal walls resound
With joy for my salvation."

In broken accents he was heard to utter, “The golden gates, the golden gates, the golden gates!” His countenance also was observed to shine with a peculiar and heavenly lustre.

He continued in a happy frame, talking as if to himself of the sufferings of Christ, saying, “What are my sufferings to His sweat and blood?” This was the substance of what was gathered from his many broken expressions, and thus he remained until within four minutes of his departure, when he sweetly fell asleep in Jesus, about six o’clock on Monday morning, February 4th, 1861.

BOOK REVIEWS

Charles Jeffreys, by Henry Sant; paperback; 41 pages; price £3 including postage; published by The Huntingtonian Press, and obtainable from 72A Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, SO30 4EB.

Lovers of that little group of godly people associated with the Gilpins and James Bourne will be most grateful to welcome another short life of one of its members. Charles Jeffreys appears in *More Than Notion*, and we have always wanted to know more about him.

Charles Jeffreys was the brother of Bernard Gilpin’s wife. Born in 1801, he became an eminent academic, Fellow of St. John’s College, Cambridge, and a clergyman in the established Church of England. Denouncing all this for Christ’s sake, he united with the godly group meeting in London under the pastorate of Joseph Francis Burrell. Becoming a preacher himself, for some time he ministered in Birkenhead, but then emigrated to New Zealand, where he died in 1862. He preached to a congregation there to the end.

In Charles Jeffreys can be seen the deep, experimental godliness which characterised this group of believers. We are most grateful to Mr. Sant for his research and for this interesting biography.

The book is sub-titled “A Spiritual Seceder,” and there is a coloured reproduction of an oil painting of Charles Jeffreys on the front.

Trading and Thriving in Godliness: The Piety of George Swinnock, edited by J. Stephen Yuille; paperback; 215 pages; price \$10; published by Reformation Heritage Books, and obtainable from some Christian bookshops (for instance, Ossett).

We like Swinnock. We think of him whenever we pass St. Nicholas’ Church, Great Kimble (pictured on page 15), from which he was ejected in 1662.

George Swinnock (1627-1673) is one of the most readable of the Puritans. A lively writer, his writings abound with striking illustrations and comparisons (some a little far-fetched!) He is specially remembered for his writing on practical godliness and Christian living.

Trading and Thriving in Godliness contains nearly fifty short, profitable extracts from Swinnock’s works. Sometimes we wish they were longer – so that we could read more and see the author develop his subject. In this way, though,

they are a good introduction to George Swinnock's complete works, which are still in print.

Union and Communion with Christ, by Maurice Roberts; paperback; 136 pages; price \$10; published by Reformation Heritage Books, and obtainable from some Christian bookshops.

Surely there can be no more important subject than union and communion with the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Maurice Roberts, minister in the Free Church of Scotland (continuing) is one of the best of present-day writers. His style is very serious, reverent and spiritual, he keeps closely to the Authorized Version, and he is not ashamed to use (what some would call) the old-fashioned phraseology. In some ways he seems like an heir of the old Scottish divines – such as Ralph Erskine. There are, of course, the differences we have with the Scots (e.g. free offer; law the believer's rule of conduct, etc.).

The only very slight criticism is the similarity between the eighteen chapters.

Also received:

Concerning the True Care of Souls, by Martin Bucer.

Christ and the Future, by Cornelius P. Venema, and a study guide.

Ossett Christian Bookshop have informed us that they can sell the children's book on Calvin (recommended in the July *Gospel Standard*) for £10.

How different from that cold assent of the understanding to the general truths of the gospel, which satisfies an unbelieving world, is the faith which the Spirit of God works in the hearts of His people! The believer in Jesus is the new creation of God. His mind is enlightened from above. His heart is made to feel its guilt and misery. He reads the Word of God with an interest unfelt before. He reads it as a revelation of love from the God of mercy, proclaiming pardon to the guilty, peace to the miserable, and purity to the polluted. Every declaration bears, to his mind, the stamp of truth. He requires no other sanction than "thus saith the Lord," and finding this, he reads with reverence, and seeks for grace to receive with all meekness the engrafted Word which is able to save his soul. He finds his own character exactly portrayed in its sacred pages.

He looks within, and is able to trace sin through the dark recesses and secret windings of his heart. He discovers those latent seeds of evil, those bitter springs of misery, unbelief, and pride and lust, and covetousness, which are continually pouring forth their deadly streams into his outward life. He traces all this evil to the fall of man, and finds that the deadly poison has contaminated the whole posterity of Adam. He owns himself a sinner, both by nature and practice. He justifies the righteous judgment of God, whose law he has broken, and whose tremendous curse he has so awfully incurred. He no longer tries to palliate his offences, or invent soft names whereby to varnish over the deformity of sin. He frankly and fully confesses himself a rebel, guilty of death, and deserving of nothing less than eternal damnation.

Thomas Reade

CHRIST VISITING HIS PEOPLE

*"Behold, He standeth behind our wall, He looketh forth
at the windows, shewing Himself through the lattice" (Song 2. 9).*

Come, friends, admire how He renews
The visits of His grace,
And in what various forms He shows,
The beauties of His face.

His darkest ways will prove Him kind;
For, when He hides at all,
He goes not far, but stands behind
Our own partition-wall.

Though we alas! do build up high
The hiding wall of sin,
Yet He behind it, very nigh,
Stands ready to come in.

His feet no rest can elsewhere take,
But skipping, leaping, move,
Till me the resting-place He make,
And centre of His love.

And though while in this distant place,
This vale of sin and thrall,
There's still between me and His face
A thick, a darkening wall;

Yet distance alters not His love,
Nor ought abates His care,
Which force Him through the wall to move,
And make a window there:

That there, as through a window-glass
However dark and dim,
His eyes of love to me may pass,
Mine eye of faith to Him.

Through lattices that light divide,
Through glorious gospel-lines,
A veil of flesh, a pierced side
His love, His beauty shines.

Ralph Erskine (1685-1752)

Those are the best prepared for the greatest mercies that see themselves
unworthy of the least.

Thomas Watson

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
SEPTEMBER 2009

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

**THE DISTRESS THAT WE ARE IN
GOD'S ANSWER IN THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH**

*Address given at the Annual Meeting of the Gospel Standard Trust
at Clifton Chapel, Bedfordshire, on May 16th, 2009*

Mr. Chairman and dear friends, before actually beginning my address there is just one observation I would like to make. How much we need godly Nehemiahs today! We think of the dreadful disclosures this last week of what has been taking place in Parliament,* the dishonesty, the greed, and then we think of Nehemiah. He very simply and clearly tells us that he had a wonderful expenses claim as governor of Jerusalem, and he details what he might have claimed, and lawfully so, and all the other governors before him had claimed it. But he said that because of the poverty of the people and the need of Jerusalem, before God he never took one single thing; and he gives the reason: "So did not I, because of the fear of the Lord." So I just repeat it at the beginning: what a need we have for godly Nehemiahs today, those in high places who truly fear God!

Now the title of my address this afternoon is: "*The distress that we are in: God's answer in the Book of Nehemiah*," and the title, if you want to look at it, is taken from Nehemiah chapter 2, verse 17: "Then said I," that is Nehemiah, "Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." The distress Jerusalem was in, a scene of disaster and desolation, the gates burnt, the walls fallen down – what a picture that is of our churches in the present day!

You know, this is part of our Christian vocabulary, "building the walls of Jerusalem." We all know what we mean by it. Of course, it is scriptural; the prayer: "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem." And even in popular religious language, thinking of William Blake's well known poem, seeking to "build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land." We all know what we mean by it, seeking for a gracious reviving in the church of God. These desolations, the gates burned with fire, the walls broken down. We have been reminded in our Secretary's address of this very thing, the

* Dishonest or extravagant expenses claims.

desolations, chapels being closed, low numbers attending, deviations from the truth both on the right hand as well as on the left hand, dreadful lukewarmness and apathy and worldliness.

So I am sure we do not need to labour this point, the distress that we are in, the desolations of Zion. The subject is God's answer, not man's answer, not Nehemiah's answer, God's answer in the Book of Nehemiah. Look, here right at the beginning, this re-building of the walls at Jerusalem was almost an impossibility. Jerusalem had lain desolate for so long, it was almost an impossibility, but the Lord had an answer and the Lord did it. With God's help, I want to trace this out with you this afternoon, and with our prayer that the Lord will do something like that for us in England and in our churches in the present day.

Now the first thing is this: God raised up a man, one man, Nehemiah. He was a great man, an eminent man. He was living a thousand miles away in Babylon. He was the king's cupbearer, and one day news came to him of the dreadful desolations of his beloved Jerusalem, and his heart was filled with sorrow. He might have said, "Well, it is not really anything to do with me. I am so far away. What can one man do?" But the Word of God tells us this (and it is a beautiful description), he was a man sent forth "to seek the welfare of the children of Israel." I think that is a beautiful word, and is it not that which we look for and long for today in our churches? Men that God sends forth "to seek the welfare of the children of Israel." You say, "What can one man do?" What can one man *not* do if the Lord is with him, if it is the Lord's purpose to use him?

Then these deep concerns, this deep sorrow, this longing for God's honour and glory, this desire that things might be different, this longing that Jerusalem might be built again. You know what Nehemiah said? He said, "God put it in my heart." That is the secret of it all, beloved friends, and that is the beginning. *God put it in his heart.* May the Lord put these things in our hearts this afternoon, put these things in the hearts of many people, especially our younger people, the girls and the boys in our congregations. "God put it in my heart." Now that is the beginning. When the Lord wants a man, that man is there. God appointed a man and God raised up that man, Nehemiah.

Now what next? Nehemiah prayed, and he was blessed with a real spirit of prayer. Nehemiah's prayer for the welfare of Zion, for the honour and glory of God, for the building again of Jerusalem, is one of the very blessed prayers of the Old Testament and many sermons could be preached on that prayer. But Nehemiah saw the greatness of God and His mercy. It is a wonderful thing if we can see those two things together in our prayers. He saw the greatness of God, what He was able to do, to build up Jerusalem's walls, however impossible; and he saw the

mercy of God, that although they were undeserving, here they had the sinners' all prevailing plea. But how Nehemiah poured out his heart in humble confession of his soul, not just the sin of God's people, not just the sin of Israel, not just the sin of the Jews, but his own sin personally! He could not get low enough in self-aborrence.

I wonder sometimes if this spirit of real confession and real repentance is missing when we think of our special days of prayer. We see the distress we are in, we beg the Lord to make things different; perhaps it would be better for us, perhaps it would seem nicer, perhaps it would be more comfortable; but Nehemiah did not come on that ground at all. He mourned and he grieved over the people's unworthiness and sin and he identified with them. He confessed his own sin. Then he saw that the Lord had a promise and he pleaded it. Then he saw what God had done for His people in days past and he pleaded that.

So we have this very remarkable prayer, and God answered it. How it was going to take place, in what way, Nehemiah did not know but he committed it all into the hands of God. He was so burdened, he was so concerned for the honour and glory of God, the reproach upon the Lord's name, a desire to see better days in Zion.

Then what follows? God opened the way. Nehemiah was in the presence of the king (remember he was a great king), and he was sad and the king asked him why? And Nehemiah told him. But between the question and the answer Nehemiah said, "And I prayed unto the Lord." It was the upward glancing of an eye. O but did not the Lord most blessedly and graciously answer it! Very honestly, simply, Nehemiah told the king. He told him his distress. He told him about the ruins of Jerusalem, and the Lord made him bold. He asked permission to go to Jerusalem. You see, there was the constraining of love here, love to the Lord, love for His honour and glory, love to His people. Now may we know something of that constraining. He asked that he might be able to go to Jerusalem. He asked for a guard and escort. He asked for timber. He asked for supplies. And the king kindly gave him everything that he asked for. The way was opened up. You hear what Nehemiah said, the secret of it all: "According to the good hand of my God upon me." That is the secret. It was then, and it is now. It is the only secret: "According to the good hand of my God upon me." That good hand was with Nehemiah all the way through and that good hand was almighty.

I find Nehemiah chapter 3 intensely interesting. The general concern started with one man, the Lord stirring him up, the Lord moving him, the Lord with him. Then the vast majority of the people were affected. "Let us rise up and build the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." Let us be clear, beloved friends, only God can build

the walls of Jerusalem but God uses means. Here is a long list of people and what they did, and the secret of it all was this: all these different people mentioned in Nehemiah chapter 3 repaired the piece of the wall nearest to their own home, nearest to where they lived. There is a lot of deep divinity there, you know. That is where real repentance begins, that is where real revival begins in the church of God, that is where spiritual prosperity begins when it begins with you, with me. Each of them repaired the piece that was closest to their own home, and it was the constraining of love. You see, God was at work, and what He did then, He can do now.

What is interesting to me has been this. You see even the priests, there they were labouring with their own hands, doing this manual work for the honour and glory of God re-building their piece. We read of one man that he owned half of Jerusalem, he was a great man, but there he was labouring with his hands repairing his piece. We read of the goldsmiths (I take it they must have been the wealthiest people in Jerusalem), but they were not ashamed to repair their own piece with their own hands, not giving a piece of gold to some servant to do it. We even read of women repairing their piece, labouring, building the walls of Jerusalem. We read of some who did not even live in Jerusalem, but they were constrained by love to help. And the Lord was with them, the Lord was watching, and the Holy Spirit has recorded of one that he *earnestly* repaired his piece, and the Holy Spirit has recorded of another, that when he had finished his piece, he repaired another piece. Then we read of some who "put not their necks to the work." They were half-hearted in the things of God. It is a wonderful chapter, Nehemiah chapter 3. It was God, God building the walls of Jerusalem, only He could do it; but God uses means and some of them very simple.

Now beloved friends, you know what comes next, you know what to expect and it is this – there were enemies. We keep reading about Sanballat and Tobiah, these evil men, and we are told that they were grieved because of what God was doing and because of what Nehemiah was doing. They were grieved as they saw that wall being built, that wall being repaired. Satan hates God's work and Satan's servants hate God's work. If there was ever a day in our country when this has been seen, it is this present day, when almost anything sacred is being opposed, almost anything connected with the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is being opposed.

Nehemiah had to face this constant barrage of opposition. It was persistent, it went on, and if the devil does not succeed one way, how often he tries another. False accusations, and when these false accusations failed, open attempts to stop them by violence. When these

failed, mockery. There are many people that stand those vicious attacks but they cannot bear to be laughed at. After the vicious attacks came the mockery. You remember, Tobiah said if even a fox trod on the wall, the wall would fall down. Mockery!

Then a man came named Shemaiah who said he had come with a message from God telling them what to do, and what not to do, and what they must do, and what they must not do, but he never came from God at all. He was just an impostor sent by the enemies. Now that has always been a great trial in the church of God. These impostors who come, they speak with such authority claiming to be sent from God, but Nehemiah said, "I perceived that God had not sent him." Now it is a wonderful mercy if the church of God has discernment when something comes before them professing to be from the most High God, to try the spirits and to distinguish the things that are wrong! But it was the persistence of it. And last of all, Satan's tactic was this: these enemies pretended they were friends, and they asked if they could join in, and they asked that they might be allowed to help. That is the most subtle attack of all.

Nehemiah, with the grace of God, was able to stand against all these subtle attacks as well as the open attacks, all these different attacks. What we are getting today in the church of God is this last attack. These who say they can go with us and they want to help. But whatever name you call it by, whatever title you give to it, the Lord has set a difference, and there *is* a difference, and there can be no fellowship between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." The power of God, the grace of God, enabled Nehemiah to stand. You see the work going on and you see them with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other.

But there is a background to this and the background is just the same as when Nehemiah began. It is a background of prayer. All along Nehemiah kept praying his way. You have these little, short prayers, one coming in here and another coming in there: "O God, strengthen Thou my hands"; "Think upon me, O my God, for good." We find a lot of them coming in and they keep coming in again. That was the secret of it, the Lord's enabling, the Lord's blessing, the Lord's giving them strength, the Lord accomplishing His own purpose, this wonderful background. Day by day the walls growing higher and the breaches are being made up, and all along this background of prayer, this sense of weakness, this sense of unworthiness, this looking to the Lord alone, this depending entirely on the arm of His strength.

And so we come to the end. Finally the wall was completely re-built, and in a short time. It did not seem possible; it seemed it never

could happen. There were so many attempts to overthrow it, to stop it but it was God's purpose that Jerusalem's walls should be re-built and God's purposes stand. *And it all began with the Lord putting it into the heart of one man.* Beloved friends, pray that our churches might be blessed with Nehemiahs and may there be Nehemiahs among our young people. Perhaps some of you here this afternoon are going to be these Nehemiahs. He felt he was nothing in himself. All that he had he received from God.

Then we read the simple statement that the wall was completed. Now that is the end of the building of the wall but that is *not* the end. The end is this: what Nehemiah said (it is what you expect him to say): "This work was wrought of God" – the secret of it all from first to last. "This work was wrought of God."

The distress that we are in: God's answer in the Book of Nehemiah. Well, I am sure all of you can see the relevance of it in the church of God today. May it be our prayerful desire, may it be our longing, and we have a few things that Nehemiah had not. When he lived the veil of the temple was not yet rent in twain. It was still a shadowy dispensation. Christ had not yet come. There had not been that triumphant cry: "It is finished." We have got that plea in prayer, "For Jesus' sake." We have got the precious blood to plead when we realise our unworthiness. We can look to a risen, exalted Saviour. We can meditate on the power of His resurrection. Now we see all this in a New Testament sense, in a gospel sense, as it concerns us in the present day.

Now I have just one last comment this afternoon. I was reading one of the Puritans recently and he quoted that word, the well-known word, and he used it in rather an unusual way, the beautiful scripture: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." He made a comment something like this: "Reading the Old Testament will not be of any real profit to us unless we constantly keep this in view, that the Lord is the same today as He was yesterday, as He was in Old Testament times, and He will still be the same for ever." So what an application that has to the Book of Nehemiah! What the Lord was then, the Lord still is today, Nehemiah's God, "the same yesterday and to day and forever."

"Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." Here is set forth the power of God, the people on whom that power is exerted, and the blessed effects of it upon their souls. This power is the power of God unto salvation. When He works, who can resist it? It is convincing power, converting power, sustaining power.

Thomas Reade

SINNERS DRAWN TO CHRIST

*Address given at the Lord's table by Dr. John Owen
on September 5th, 1675*

I shall offer a few words to direct you in the present exercise of faith in this ordinance. I design no more but to give occasion to that particular exercise of faith which is now required of us, whereby we may sanctify the name of God in a due manner, give glory to Him by believing, and receive establishment unto our own souls. And I would do it by minding you of that word of our Lord Jesus Christ in John 12. 32:

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.”

What He means by His *lifting up*, the evangelist expounds in the next words, which are these: “This He said, signifying what death He should die.” So that the lifting up of Christ on the cross is that which He lays as the foundation of His drawing sinners unto Him. No sinner will come near to Christ unless he be drawn; and to be drawn is to be made willing to come unto Him and to follow Him in chains of love. Christ draws none to Him whether they will or no; but He casts on their minds, hearts and wills the cords of His grace and love, working in them powerfully, working on them kindly, to cause them to choose Him, to come to Him and to follow Him. “Draw me, we will run after Thee.” The great principle and fountain from whence the drawing efficacy and power of grace doth proceed is from the lifting up of Christ. Drawing grace is manifested in, and drawing love proceeds from, the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the cross.

But that which I would just mind you of at present is this: that the look of faith unto Christ as lifted up is the only means of bringing our souls near to Him. Our faith is often expressed by looking *unto* Christ. “Look unto Me,” says He, “and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isa. 45. 22). The conclusion is that those who so look unto Him shall be justified and saved. “Behold Me, behold Me” (Isa. 65. 1).

And it is the great promise of the efficacy of the Spirit poured out upon us that we shall look upon Him whom we have pierced (Zech. 12. 10). God calls us to look off from all other things; look off from the law, look off from self, look off from sin, look *only* unto Christ. Is Christ said to be lifted up in His death, and to die that manner of death wherein He was lifted up on the cross? So it was expressed in the type. The brazen serpent was lifted up on a pole, that those who were smitten with the fiery serpents might look to it. If the soul can but turn an eye of faith unto Jesus Christ as thus lifted up, it will receive healing, though the sight of one be not so clear as the sight of another.

All had not a like sharpness of sight that looked to the brazen serpent, nor have all the like vigour of faith to look to Christ. But one sincere look to Christ is pleasing to Him; so as He says, "Thou hast ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse; thou hast ravished My heart with one of thine eyes" (Song 4. 9). A soul sensible of guilt and sin, that casts but one look of faith to Christ as lifted up, it even raises the heart of Christ Himself, and such a soul shall not go away unrefreshed, unrelieved.

Now, brethren, the end of this ordinance is to lift up Christ in representation. As He was lifted up really on the cross, and as in the whole preaching of the gospel Christ is evidently crucified before our eyes, so more especially in the administration of this ordinance. Do we see, then, wherein the special acting of faith in this ordinance does consist? God forbid we should neglect the stirring up our hearts unto the particular acting of faith in Jesus Christ, who herein is lifted up before us. That which we are to endeavour in this ordinance is to get a view by faith – faith working by thoughts, by meditation, acting by love – a view of Christ as lifted up; that is, as bearing our iniquities in His own body on the tree. What did Christ do on the tree? What was He lifted up for, if it was not to bear our sins? Out of His love and zeal to the glory of God, and out of compassion to the souls of men, Christ bore the guilt and punishment of sin, and made expiation for it.

O that God in this ordinance would give our souls a view of Him! I shall give it to myself and to you in charge at this time – if we have a view of Christ by faith as lifted up, our hearts will be drawn nearer to Him. If we find not our hearts in any manner drawn nearer to Him, it is much to be feared we have not had a view of Him as bearing our iniquities. Take, therefore, this one remembrance as to the acting of faith in the administration of this ordinance – labour to have it fixed upon Christ as bearing sin, making atonement for it, with His heart full of love to accomplish a cause in righteousness and truth.



Jesus is the Head over all things to His church. All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. As He rules over all, so He overrules all for the good of His people. Hence the apostle could confidently declare, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." All this is cheering to the humble followers of the Lamb. Are they in trouble? Jesus appoints it for their good. Are they joyful? The joy of the Lord is their strength. Well may the believer triumphantly exclaim, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Thomas Reade

THE BOW IN THE CLOUD

By Henry Law

We are led to look for our bow on the brow of every threatening storm. In the world of nature it is not always visible, but in the world of grace it ever shines. When the darkest clouds thicken around us, the Sun of Righteousness is neither set nor has eclipse, and its ready smile converts the drops into an arch of peace.

Let a few cases from the diary of experience illustrate this. In our journey through the wilderness, the horizon is often obscured by storms like these; terrors of conscience, absence of peace, harassing perplexities, crushing burdens of difficulties. But from behind these dusky curtains, the bow strides forth in its strength.

It is indeed a cheerless day when terrors of conscience pour down pitiless peltings. Spectres of past sins start up. A grim array of bygone iniquities burst their tombs, and each terrifies by hideous form, and each points to eternal death as its due. The light of life seems excluded by the dread: can there be hope, when sins have been so many, and so grievous, and against the clearest knowledge, and after such tender pardons, and such healings of mercy? Wild is this tempest's roar, but in its midst faith can still look upwards and see Jesus with outstretched arms before the throne of God. There is a rainbow upon His head, and the bright colours write, "Father, forgive them." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." The darkness vanishes, and clear joy returns.

Absence of peace, too, is a heavy cloud. Many a cross of spiritual distress lies in the believer's path. Today he may recline joyously on the sunny slopes of the gospel; tomorrow the thunders of Sinai affright. Today David sits high at the banquet of the king; tomorrow he is an outcast in the cave of Adullam. Now the church rejoices in the voice of her Beloved, that knocketh, saying, "Open to Me"; soon she laments, "I sought Him, but I could not find Him." I must not pause to explore the marshes from which these chilly mists arise. But it is sure that the fault is with our hearts. Sin may be indulged; then comforts die. Means of grace may be neglected; then heavenly communions are shut out. But in these dreary hours the gladdening bow which crowns the Redeemer's head will suddenly appear. In letters of light the truth is emblazoned, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." "I change not, therefore are ye not consumed." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Again the darkness vanishes and clear joy returns.

Perplexities are often as a mass of clouds. The pilgrim would climb the hill of Zion, but impassable rocks are on either side; the sea is in the front; the Egyptians in the rear. He sighs, as the lepers of Samaria, "If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we

shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also" (2 Kings 7. 4). He is in the straits of David. The enemy has left him desolate; his friends are ready to stone him (1 Sam. 30. 6). But he looks aloft to Jesus and the bow is bright. The "faithful and true Witness" cheers him onward: "This is the way, walk ye in it." "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye."

So also burdens of difficulties often oppress. The believer is ready to sink beneath the weight. Moses felt this when he said, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel?" But a bow was in the cloud, and it sparkled with the promise, "Certainly I will be with thee." He went and prospered. The women on the way to the sepulchre were in gloom, "Who," said they, "will roll us away the stone?" But a bow was in the cloud. Hoping against hope, they advanced, and the stone was gone. Paul trembled when he was to stand alone before the tyrant and his court. But a bow was in the cloud, and he took courage: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me ... and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."

JOHN NEWTON'S TESTIMONY

I am like your flowers, getting apace into an autumn state. The Lord grant I may find the declension of vigour, which I must soon expect to feel, balanced by a ripeness in judgment and experience as you speak. If it be so with me, it is in a great measure hidden from me. To be sure, I have had more proofs of an evil nature and deceitful heart than I could possibly expect or conceive of twenty years ago, though I then thought I found as much of it as I could bear. I believe likewise my understanding is more enlightened into the three great mysteries of the Person, love and life of Jesus.

Yet I seem to groan under darkness, coldness and confusion as much as ever. And I believe I must go out of the world with the same language upon my lips which I used when I first ventured to a throne of grace: Have mercy upon me, O Lord, a poor, worthless sinner. My feelings are faint; my services feeble and defiled; my defects, mistakes and omissions innumerable; my imaginations are wild as the clouds in a storm, yea, too often foul as a common sewer.

What can I set against this mournful confession? Only this: that Christ hath died and is risen again; I believe He is able to save to the uttermost, and He hath said, "Whosoever cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." Upon His Person, worth and promise rests all my hope; but this is a foundation able to bear the greatest weight.

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

From Heaven Taken by Storm by Thomas Watson

The third duty* wherein we are to offer violence to ourselves is in prayer. Prayer is a duty which keeps the trade of religion a going. When we either join in prayer with others, or pray alone, we must use holy violence; not eloquence in prayer, but violence carries it. Theodorus speaking of Luther: "Once," said he, "I overheard him in prayer, but with what life and spirit did he pray! It was with so much reverence as if he were speaking to God, yet with so much confidence as if he had been speaking to his friend." There must be a stirring up of the heart, 1. To prayer; 2. In prayer.

1. A stirring up of the heart to prayer. "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands towards Him" (Job 11. 13). This preparing our heart is by holy thoughts and ejaculations. The musician first tunes his instrument before he plays.

2. There must be a stirring up of the heart in prayer. Prayer is a lifting up of the mind and soul to God, which cannot be done aright without offering violence to one's self. The names given to prayer import violence. It is called wrestling (Gen. 32. 24) and pouring out the soul (1 Sam 1. 15), both which imply vehemency. The affection is required as well as the invention. The apostle speaks of an effectual, fervent prayer, which is a parallel phrase to offering violence.

Alas! how far are they from offering violence to themselves in prayer,

1. That give God a dead, heartless prayer. God would not have the blind offered (Mal. 1. 8). As good offer the blind as the dead. Some are half asleep when they pray, and will a sleepy prayer ever awaken God? Such as mind not their own prayers, how do they think that God should mind them? Those prayers God likes best which come seething hot from the heart.

2. How far are they from offering violence that give God distracted prayer? While they are praying, they are thinking of their shop and trade. How can ye shoot right whose eye is quite off the mark? "Their heart goeth after their covetousness" (Ezek. 33. 31). Many are casting up their accounts in prayer, as Hierom [Jerome] once complained of himself. How can God be pleased with this? Will a king endure that while his subject is delivering a petition and speaking to him, he should be playing with a feather? When we send our hearts on an errand to heaven, how often do they loiter and play by the way? This is matter of blushing. That we may offer violence to ourselves and by fervency feather the wing of prayer, let these things be duly weighed.

* The Puritans used the word "duty" for any religious exercise. (See our hymn 455.)

The majesty of God with whom we have to do. He sees how it is with us in prayer, whether we are deeply affected with those things we pray for. "The king came in to see the guests" (Matt. 22. 11). So when we go to pray, the King of glory comes in to see in what frame we are. He hath a window which looks into our breasts, and if He sees a dead heart, He may turn a deaf ear. Nothing will sooner make God's anger wax hot than a cold prayer.

Prayer without fervency and violence is no prayer; it is speaking, not praying. Lifeless prayer is no more prayer than the picture of a man is a man. To say a prayer is not to pray. Aschanius taught his parrot the Lord's prayer. Ambrose saith well, "It is the life and affection in a duty that baptizeth it and giveth it a name." It is the violence and wrestling of the affections that make it a prayer, else it is no prayer. But a man may say as Pharoah, "I have dreamed a dream" (Gen. 41. 15).

3. The zeal and violence of the affections in prayer best suits with God's nature. He is a Spirit (John 4. 24), and sure that prayer which is full of life and spirit is the "savoury meat He loves"; "Spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God" (1 Pet. 2. 5). Spirituality and fervency in duty is like the spirits of wine, which are the more refined part of the wine. Bodily exercise profits nothing. It is not the stretching of the lungs, but the vehemency of the desire makes music in God's ears.

4. Consider the need we have of those things which we ask in prayer. We come to ask the favour of God, and if we have not His love, all that we enjoy is cursed to us. We pray that our souls may be washed in Christ's blood, and if He wash us not, "we have no part in Him." These are such mercies that if God deny us, we are for ever undone; therefore what violence had we need put forth in prayer? When will a man be earnest, if not when he is begging for his life?

5. Let it provoke violence in prayer to consider those things which we ask, God hath a mind to grant. If a son ask nothing but what his father is willing to bestow, he may be the more earnest in his suit. We go to God for pardon of sin, and no work is more pleasing to Him than to seal pardons. Mercy is His delight (Mic. 7. 18). We pray to God for a holy heart, and this prayer is according to His will. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4. 3). We pray that God would give us a heart to love Him. How pleasing must this request needs be to God! This, if anything, may excite prayer and carry it in a fiery chariot up to heaven, when we know we pray for nothing but what God is more willing to grant than we are to ask.

6. No mercy can be bestowed on us but in a way of prayer. Mercy is through Christ's blood, but it is conveyed by prayer. All the promises are bonds made over to us, but prayer puts these bonds in suit. The Lord

hath told Israel with what rich mercy He would bespangle them. He would bring them to their native country, and bring them thither with new hearts (Ezek. 36. 26). Yet this tree of the promise would not drop its fruit till shaken with the hand of prayer. "I will yet for this be enquired of" (verse 37). The breast of God's mercy is full, but prayer must draw the breast. Surely if all other ways are blocked up, there is no good to be done without prayer; how should we ply this oar, and by a holy violence stir up ourselves to take hold of God.

7. It is only violence and intenseness of spirit in prayer hath the promise of mercy affixed to it. "Knock, and it shall be opened" (Matt. 7. 7). Knocking is a violent motion. The *Ædiles* [magistrates] among the Romans had their doors always standing open that all who had petitions might have free access to them. God's heart is ever open to fervent prayer. Let us then be fired with zeal, and with Christ pray yet more earnestly. It is violence in prayer makes heaven's gates fly open, and fetcheth in whatever mercies we stand in need of.

8. The large returns God hath given to violent prayer. This dove sent to heaven hath often brought an olive leaf in its mouth. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him" (Psa. 34. 6). Crying prayer prevails. Daniel in the den prayed and prevailed. Prayer did shut the lion's mouth, and open the lion's den. Fervent prayer (saith one) hath a kind of omnipotency in it. Sozomen saith of Apollonius that he never asked anything of God in all his life that he obtained not. Sleidan reports of Luther that perceiving the interest of religion to be low, he betook himself to prayer. At length rising off his knees, he came out of his closet triumphantly, saying to his friends, "We have overcome; we have overcome." At which time it was observed there came out a proclamation from Charles V that none be further molested for the profession of the gospel. How may this encourage us and make us hoist up the sails of prayer, when others of the saints have had such good returns from the holy land.

i. That we may put forth this holy violence in prayer, it is requisite there be a renewed principle of grace. If the person be graceless, no wonder the prayer is heartless. The body while it is dead hath no heat in it; while a man is dead in sin, he can have no heat in duty.

ii. That we may be the more violent in prayer, it is good to pray with a sense of our wants. A beggar that is pinched with want will be earnest in craving an alms. Christian, review thy wants. Thou wantest an humble, spiritual frame of heart; thou wantest the light of God's countenance. The sense of want will quicken prayer. That man can never pray fervently that doth not pray feelingly. How earnest was Samson for water when he was ready to die. "I die for thirst" (Judg. 15. 18).

iii. If we would be violent in prayer, let us beg a violent wind.* The Spirit of God is resembled to a “rushing mighty wind” (Acts 2. 2). Then we are violent, when this blessed wind fills our sails. “Praying in the Holy Ghost” (Jude 20). If any fire be in our sacrifice, it comes down from heaven.

There is a remarkable story in the well-known *Life of Colonel Gardiner*, by Philip Doddridge. Gardiner had an immoral meeting with a woman fixed for midnight, but in the mysterious providence of God, while waiting, he picked up Watson’s *Heaven Taken by Storm*. It had such a powerful effect on him that from that moment his life was changed.

SINGING

By John Wells, 1676

1. *Singing is the music of nature.* The Scriptures tell us the mountains sing (Isa. 44. 23); the valleys sing (Psa. 65. 13); the trees of the wood sing (1 Chron. 16. 33). Nay, the air is the birds’ music-room, where they chant their musical notes.

2. *Singing is the music of ordinances.* Augustine reports of himself that when he came to Milan and heard the people sing, he wept for joy in the church to hear that pleasing melody. And Beza confesses that at his first entrance into the congregation, and hearing them sing Psalm 91, he felt himself exceedingly comforted and did retain the sound of it afterwards upon his heart. The rabbis tell us that the Jews, after the feast of the Passover was celebrated, sang Psalm 111 and the five following psalms; and our Saviour and His apostles “sang an hymn” immediately after the blessed supper (Matt. 26. 30).

3. *Singing is the music of saints.*

i. They have performed this duty in their greatest numbers (Psa. 149. 1).

ii. In their greatest straits (Isa. 26. 19).

iii. In their greatest flight (Isa. 42. 10, 11).

iv. In their greatest deliverances (Isa. 65. 14).

v. In their greatest plenties.

In all these changes, singing hath been their stated duty and delight. And indeed it is meet that the saints and servants of God should sing forth their joys and praises to the Lord almighty; every attribute of Him can set both their song and their tune.

4. *Singing is the music of angels.* Job tells us, “The morning stars sang together” (Job 38. 7). Now these morning stars, as Pineda tells us,

* This is the foundation underlying the whole of Watson’s book – though not obvious at the beginning of this article. God often answers poor prayers “for Jesus’ sake.”

are the angels; to which the Chaldee paraphrase accords, naming these morning stars *aciem angelorum*, "a host of angels." Nay, when this heavenly host was sent to proclaim the birth of our dearest Jesus, they delivered their message in this raised way of duty (Luke 2. 13). They were delivering their messages in a "laudatory singing," the whole company of angels making a musical choir. Nay, in heaven there is the angels' joyous music; they there sing hallelujahs to the Most High and to the Lamb who sits upon the throne (Rev. 5. 11, 12).

5. *Singing is the music of heaven.* The glorious saints and angels accent their praises this way, and make one harmony in their state of blessedness; and this is the music of the bride-chamber (Rev. 15. 3). The saints who were tuning here their psalms are now singing hallelujahs in a louder strain and articulating their joys, which here they could not express to their perfect satisfaction. Here they laboured with drowsy hearts and faltering tongues, but in glory these impediments are removed, and nothing is left to jar their joyous celebrations.

A CONFIRMING TESTIMONY

From the 1957 Gospel Standard. We assume "L.S.B.H." was our old friend Mr. Leslie Hyde, and "Mr. W." our former deacon, Mr. A.J. Watts, who had republished M'Kenzie's sermon.

Dear Mr. W.,

I know you experience many things from many quarters to discourage in any labour of love.... One of the greatest discouragements I believe is silence, absolute silence from everybody; a silence which no doubt wrung out of the prophet those words: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" I say silence, but Satan is not silent; he often roars in our souls that our time is wasted, that we shall do more harm than good, and it is very doubtful anyway that anything good will come out of it. You may have had some of these suggestions and how paralysing they can be! Feeble as my pen is, weak as my voice may be, yet let me use them now to declare that if such suggestions your spirit have plied, the devil is the liar he always was, and the heart is still as deceitful as it always was, and both would bring us to despair, working individually. How much more so when they join forces!

Now I want to tell you how strengthening I found this sermon to be [obviously M'Kenzie's "The Sealing of the Spirit"], and I was not alone. As I read on through it, I knew the man was setting forth truth because I had proved many of those precious things set forth, not only in the believing but in the sealing too. How true it is that the reality of the

experience cannot so much be described as felt, and yet when one tries to describe a pathway, if we have passed that way too, the feeling is conveyed and we are persuaded it is a true description. I think this is particularly true with regard to the pardon of one's sins. I used to think that that couplet in our hymnbook was a bit exaggerated:

“But when we seek to find our sins,
Our sins can ne'er be found.”

But when the dear Lord brought me to this blessed spot, I found it was a true experience, and “the half was not told.”

Another point I wanted to refer to was not in the actual sermon but in Mr. M's. experience later: “A true beginning is a beginning *felt*.” How much this needs bringing to the fore in these sad days, and how important for us to be unsatisfied until satisfied on this felt beginning. Some I know can point to a spot, because they were in the world at the time of their conversion and knew when the arrow of conviction entered. But many in our day have always been amongst us and cannot so readily determine the “beginning felt.”

Although it is twenty years since I first joined the church, yet for many of those years I was uneasy about the beginning – the beginning felt. The dear Lord had blessed me in many ways and had favoured me with some sweet manifestations of Himself, I hope. I began to fear I had climbed over the wall, had got in some other way, as I could locate where the Lord traced out my feelings under a sermon on Isaiah 35. 3, 4, and encouraged me, but the initial conviction of sin, where was that? I heard of one woman who in the beginning began to be in want, and I snapped at this and took comfort for a time. But somehow I could not really settle it in my mind. But the good Spirit, who exercises the soul, also brings to remembrance.

Accordingly a year or two since, long after I felt the pardon of my sins, had been favoured to say, “Abba, Father,” and felt a little of what the Lord endured for me, the blessed Holy Ghost brought to my mind a circumstance which had been out of sight for some twenty-three years. On a certain Whit Monday, I went to a big cricket match in London. It was a grand sunny day and a fine day's play, and when I came home my feelings may be summed up thus: What a wonderful day I have had! An hour later my Mother and a friend came in. They had been to some anniversary services.... Their faces clearly betrayed that they had had a wonderful day too. As they spoke of what they had heard, I began to feel, They have happiness which you haven't got. And a feeling of need stole into my soul; yea, I trust indelibly put there by the Holy Ghost. When I read the expression of Mr. M'Kenzie's, “A true beginning is a beginning felt,” I inwardly said, Yes, man, that's true, and blessed be

God that He so graciously though very gently kept exercising my soul about the beginning until He brought me to a spot that was *felt*.

I must offer some apology for the length of this letter, but felt I must convey to you what force I felt this reprint, and the importance I attach and which the Word of God attaches to a "beginning felt," in these days when so many get into churches with very little evidence of this felt beginning.

O may the Holy Ghost graciously condescend to bless your labour in this matter to the stirring up of many souls to see if the work begun is a good one, and not to be satisfied until they can say "Amen" to many of those points of believing and sealing set forth in this sermon.

May the dear Lord bless you with sweet manifestations of Himself and that assurance that when the house of this your earthly tabernacle is dissolved you have a building of God in heaven....

L.S.B.H.

July 21st, 1957

LETTER TO A SORELY TEMPTED MINISTER

From William Huntington to Jenkin Jenkins (1759-1810), known as "the Welsh ambassador." He was minister at Jireh Chapel, Lewes.

My dearly-beloved brother in Christ, I wish grace, mercy and peace through our ever adorable Lord Jesus.

I hear thou art still in the furnace, fitting for the important work of the ministry, and I have not a single doubt but He will turn thee out a real vessel of honour fit for the Master's use, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. Who teacheth like Him? A soul truly taught of God is made to feel the divine impressions of God's glorious perfections. A glimpse of divine holiness and a deep impression of it makes all our comeliness turn into corruption, and we cry, "Woe is me, for I am undone!"

A sense of divine justice makes us feel snares of death and the pains of hell. A sense of almighty power holds us fast to a sight of the law and a sense of our just deserts, and makes us cry out, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," while the light that shines within makes manifest the counsels of the heart. "All things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light" which doth appear. The Spirit of life quickening the soul gives it the keenest sensations, that it may be thoroughly sensible of the reality of the terrible majesty of God and feel the need of a Saviour. But under all this teaching we are upheld. "They shall be holpen with a little help." God's eyes are still upon us for good for, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite

spirit, and trembleth at my Word.” All this, my brother, paves the way for mercy, and makes it highly acceptable when it comes.

Jesus stands behind the wall of partition while we are labouring under the law, and shows Himself through the lattice of all this chequer-work of seeming contrarieties and puzzling perplexity, and, as a refiner, mitigates and regulates the heat, so that the flame doth not kindle upon us.

But when the set time to favour Zion comes, when the day of the Son of Man arrives, when the day of salvation appears, when the day of our espousals, our coronation day, is fully come, the day to forgive our iniquities, to heal our diseases and to crown us with lovingkindness and tender mercy, then Jesus becomes our hiding-place from the storm and covert from the tempest, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Then the day breaks and the shadows flee away, the veil of darkness passeth, and the true light shineth. “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” Then shalt thou look on Him whom thou hast pierced, and mourn, being in bitterness of soul, for Him, and in the vision of faith thou shalt see that Just One, and hear the voice of His words, the sight and voice of whom shall cut thee deeper, lay thee lower, and make thee appear ten times viler than the terrible sword of justice, the storms of Sinai, or all the flashes of lightning that ever darted from that mount.

O my brother, my mouth is open to you, my heart is enlarged! Let patience have its perfect work; patiently hope and quietly wait. “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” The stony heart will soon dissolve, the bonds and cords will soon fly, the bolt of unbelief will give way as soon as love touches the handle of the lock. Remember, and forget not, that our All in All is before the throne, our fountain to cleanse, our robe to cover, our ransom price; and the grace that is to make us meet for the inheritance is now in the presence of God for us; and sooner or later thou shalt put on the Lord Jesus Christ and walk in Him.

Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial of temptation; the same is accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. Satan seduced Eve, and Adam by her means. He stirred up David to number the people; he accused and resisted Joshua the high priest; he tempted the Saviour, sifted Peter and buffeted Paul. Christ was tempted in all things even as we are, that He might succour them that are tempted.

Satan is discovered by the Lord’s light. While the sword of the Spirit reaches him and lays at him, this galls the serpent, and he wreaks his rage on the spoil that is taken from him. He wants to lead the captive at his will, but divine power forbids; therefore he tempts, and tries to do by stratagem what he cannot effect by violence. Pay no regard to him;

let him curse on; let him go round the city and grin and grudge, for he shall never be satisfied. Whip him by confession and prayer; nothing cuts him worse.

The Syrophenician woman drove him both out of her daughter, and out of her house too, by a threefold petition. And Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and for ever, and never is He better pleased than when, like the poor woman, we are vexed with the devil, and cry to Him against him. His errand into this world was to destroy his works by His death, and to rescue us by His power. This the devil knows, and therefore begins to howl as soon as we begin to cry to Jesus.

O how many wonderful promises there are in God's Book to encourage the coming sinner under Satan's temptations. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"; "He shall wound the heads over many countries; He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head." "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of the people, even for salvation with Thine anointed; Thou woundest the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck" (Hab. 3. 13). The cunning power and policy of this infernal serpent is called the head; the bond of iniquity by which the devil holds and leads his slaves and vassals captive is called the neck, which ties the poor sinner to that cursed head; to discover the foundation is to shine into the heart so as to discover Satan, the origin, fountain and foundation of all evil, ruling in the heart of the disobedient.

The strong man armed keeps the palace and his goods in peace, but the Lord takes away his armour wherein he trusts. I know of no other armour in which Satan trusts than unbelief, self-righteousness, a blind mind, a stubborn will, carnal enmity, a hard heart, a seared conscience, human wisdom, pride, the chains of sin, corrupt affections and carnal security. These compose Satan's stronghold; it is the devil's panoply, and the sinner's prison; and Christ is anointed to let these prisoners go free, and justice agrees to it by the blood of the covenant.

Now it is manifest by my dear brother's letters that not one piece of the above armour remains whole upon him. The arrows of the Almighty and the sword of the Spirit go through all the joints of his harness, so that Satan's goods are not in peace, but sadly disturbed. Your soul is not in a false peace, nor the devil in quiet possession; nor can he lead thee captive at his will, nor stop the mouth of prayer, nor harden thy heart, nor blind thine eyes, nor make thee loyal to his usurped throne, nor draw thee to favour, much less support, his interest. He is the god of this world; but this world, and the god of it too, are both against thee and thou against them. Thou art more than upon even ground with thine adversary. Thou hast the advantage by gaining the heights of Zion, and thou art enabled to resist him, and deal blow for blow, and hast often

called in the assistance promised, and hast obtained it, and superior strength has been put forth in thy weakness, and thou shalt overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of thy testimony. The former shall purge thee from all thy guilt contracted, and the latter shall wound the father of falsehood and his unrighteous cause.

Satan is not thy king, but thy fowler; not thy master, but thine accuser; nor art thou his willing captive, but his enemy; not his servant, but his antagonist; and thou shalt by and by return, as the disciples did, saying, "Master, the devils are subject unto us through Thy name." Think not to escape the fiery darts of Satan any more than the rest of thy brethren. He cannot be a good soldier of Jesus Christ who never engaged in the fight of faith; nor can he prove his sonship who never was chastened; nor is he in the way to the kingdom who never was on the path of tribulation. Plenty of furnace-work furnishes us with a choice fund of experience, which is of infinite use to those who preach the kingdom of God, which kingdom stands not in word, but in power. And God will in future shine upon thy heart, and then thou wilt bring forth out of thy treasures of experience and grace things new and old. And when thou art at a loss to find out the meaning of a text, thou wilt then refer to the Spirit and His work within, and thus understand the Scriptures and the power of God, and compare spiritual things with spiritual, spiritual words with spiritual works. Thou findest already how bold, how explicit, how confident, how at a point, how nervous [vigorous] and masterly thou art in handling those subjects which thou feelest, and hast felt, in thy own soul. And as thou art with the trumpet in sounding an alarm, so wilt thou be with the harp, when thy now broken heart comes to be strung and tuned with the threefold cord of everlasting love. Then, "As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in Thee."

Go on with thy mourning for the present and wait till thy change cometh. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Satan is afraid of thee. He knows that thou art not ignorant of his devices, and that thou wilt lay him open, demolish his strongholds, weaken his interest, and that he shall suffer loss, whenever the time comes for thee to return in the power of the Spirit.

There are a great many under your ministry who are alarmed, awakened, and sensible of their chains, of their prison, of the dark regions, and of Satan's dominion over them, and he cannot rock them to sleep. This enrages and exasperates him, as the young disciples did when they preached the kingdom of God; they galled and inflamed him till he fled about the air all in a blaze. "I," saith the Saviour, "beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

We are in the hand of a good Ally; Christ is on our side. "Verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of

Abraham.” In our own nature Christ died, and in our nature He reigns and has destroyed the devil and his works in that very nature that Satan ruined, and thus outshot Satan in his own bow. O “the manifold wisdom of God”! Satan has been our tormentor, and we now torment him, and we that have been his vassals shall one day be his judges: “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?”

Go on, thou mighty man of valour, mighty in thy Saviour’s might. The sword is upon the Lord’s thigh, and there is victory written both on His thigh and on His vesture, “King of kings,, and Lord of lords.” Leviathan shall be punished, and the dragon shall be wounded, and that by the foolishness of preaching. We must storm the hole of the asp, besiege the cockatrice’s den, crush the serpent’s eggs, burn the spiders’ webs, disannul all leagues with death and covenants with hell. And who is sufficient for these things? “But our sufficiency is of God.” “I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist”; “For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” And thus we are no more than instruments; the work is the Lord’s and, “He will work, and who shall let it?”

Ever thine,

W.H.

THE GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST 43rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Report of the Meeting held at the Strict Baptist Chapel, Clifton, on
Saturday afternoon May 16th, 2009*

A good number of members and friends gathered for this annual occasion which began with the singing to the Lord’s praise of hymn 3. Mr. G.W. Hyde (Pastor, Tenterden) sought the Lord’s blessing. Our Chairman, Mr. G.D. Buss, then read Colossians chapter 3, verses 12 to 17, and made a few comments on the clause: “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.” He said that if the peace of God rules in our hearts, we are in the spirit of the gospel. There will be the peace of the atonement, the peace of God in our providences and peace with those whom we love for Christ’s sake. There will be no peace where there is a lack of obedience to the precepts and the commands of God’s holy Word as our Lord says: “If ye walk contrary to Me I will walk contrary to you.” His desire was for the peace of God so to rule in our hearts that we would be doing what the apostle bids us do: “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father

by Him.” This was the desire of the Trust Committee in helping the churches, for which the Lord’s help was continually needed.

In his report to the meeting, Mr. Playfoot, the Trust Secretary, observed that never before to his memory had the Trust been involved in the closure and disposal of so many chapels where the gospel trumpet had now fallen silent. For example, there were Goodshawfold in the north and Smallfield in the south, where contracts for sale were soon to be exchanged. How we longed for the Spirit of the Lord to be poured on the churches and upon the nation to reverse these closures and to raise up mighty men of God, if it is His will! He drew attention to the list of grants in the Annual Report and observed that in 2008 we were able to help chapels, not only in the U.K. but also in the U.S.A. and Australia. Our friends at Sheboygan needed to insulate and to clad their building whilst at Mount Zion, Geelong they had to comply with Protected Building regulations in the external repair and repainting of their chapel, which had been built in 1856. Sale proceeds from closed chapels, especially Hurstpierpoint, had continued to be a great help with chapel improvements, one of the main areas being the provision of disabled toilets. The General Fund had again dispersed more than its income by over £14,000, and that was in addition to the dispersal in the previous year of £66,000. The present low interest rates would mean that ongoing grants would need to come primarily out of reserves but the Trust did have over £780,000 cash available at the end of 2008 and this year over £170,000 had been received from the sale of Bethel Chapel, Southborough, the income from which is primarily for chapels in Kent.

The Secretary mentioned trustee responsibility – trusteeship is trust. The Committee has this responsibility under trust deeds when dealing with the sale or the alternative use of closed chapels and this brings a great concern to the Committee to know what to do when faced with situations such as we have in one case where the chapel was established for a Gospel Standard church but where the present congregation cannot subscribe wholly to those articles but do subscribe to the 1689 Baptist Confession. Subject to Charity Commission approval the Committee is seeking to enter into a lease at a nominal rent.

On the subject of compliance the Trust had sent round to the chapel correspondents in May 2008, a chapel quick checklist. The Secretary had put this into practice at Lamberhurst and using that checklist as an index, all the compliance issues affecting the chapel could be combined in one lever arch file. Two more areas of bureaucratic invention were mentioned. First, the Supplementary Guidance on the Advancement of Religion for the Public Benefit was published in December 2008. He believed that those churches which are already registered with the Charity Commission will be required in their trustee report for 2009 to

include a statement to the effect that they have considered the Public Benefit Guidance. We hope to have a suggested statement available for use by the churches later if that proves necessary. Secondly was the requirement for churches to have a separate constitution dealing with the working church funds which are distinct from the trust deed under which the building is held. These will be required when registration with the Charity Commission is obligatory from 2012 onwards. We hope to have available in due course a scripturally based draft for use by Gospel Standard churches.

Dr. Philip Skelton had, thankfully, settled in well in his new role as Publications Manager. Almost one half of the books sold by Trust Publications are in the Miracles series. At its last meeting the Committee were encouraged to learn that the Roundwood Trust, which separately produces the Miracle series in Russian and other languages, had now distributed more than one million copies. This year a little book had been produced on John Calvin to mark the five hundredth anniversary of his birth. He recommended for sound spiritual reading the DVD containing all of the Gospel Standard magazines from the commencement in 1835 to the end of 2008, and the new edition of John Warburton's autobiography of the Lord's mercies to him. Within the next three months he expected a new book containing sixteen sermons of William Tiptaft with a brief introductory account of his life. He commented that not so many messages of appreciation are received now but we press on in hope. The husbandman hath long patience. A few comments from customers were read to the meeting. The Publications department is quite small and had a total turnover of only £30,000 and an operating deficit of £17,000. Sales to the U.S.A. amounted to over 25% of the sales.

Subject to the Lord's will, the former Publications Manager, Mr. Caleb Pearce, was due to visit the U.S.A. with his wife from June 29th on an extensive tour covering a period of seven weeks, during which he hoped to speak about our books at the Gospel Standard chapels both in the U.S.A. and Canada, at the Netherlands Reformed Congregation in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey and to other groups in the southern states of Colorado, Arizona, Missouri and Georgia. He wished them the Lord's blessing. Finally, he thanked the subscribers and chapels for their continuing support of the Trust.

The Chairman thanked the Secretary for his report and also for all that he does through the year. He also thanked Dr. Skelton and Mr. Kingham at the Bookroom, Mr. Bailey for dealing with the subscriptions, and any others who so kindly help behind the scenes. The resolution to receive the Annual Report for 2008 was passed. The three retiring Committee members, Messrs. M.G. Bailey, G.D. Buss and H. Mercer, were re-elected with none against.

In a few further remarks, the Chairman emphasised the desire of the Committee to try, with the Lord's help, to help (and not to dictate to) the churches and also, in the spirit of Christ, to uphold the trusts in deeds where the Trust is a trustee. He mentioned the Gospel Standard Library and its financial needs, for which churches might feel a collection would be appropriate, and also the possibility of opening a branch of the Gospel Standard Library in Sheboygan for the benefit of U.S. readers. The friends at Clifton were warmly thanked for making us so welcome and providing refreshments.

Hymn 285 was then sung, following which Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom addressed the meeting on "The Distress that we are in – God's answer in the Book of Nehemiah." The meeting then closed with the singing of hymn 1141 and the benediction.

D.J.P.

WILLIAM DUNDERDALE

By Thomas Walsh

When he wrote this, Thomas Walsh was pastor at Bath, where he died in 1888. He was the minister preaching at Gower Street at the time J.C. Philpot died. (See G.S. 1870, page 15.)

On March 10th, 1874, aged 63, died William Dunderdale, for nearly forty years a member, and for twenty-seven of that time a deacon of the church at Kirkland, near Garstang, Lancashire. He was born in a remote and obscure farming district. His mother thought it right to have him christened, and so took him for that purpose to Mr. B., a minister in the Church of England, but she was greatly disappointed by finding him intoxicated, and incapable of performing that rite. However, she went a second time, but to her astonishment found him in the same sad and lamentable state, and had to come home with a heavy heart. She made a third attempt, but had to return with the child unchristened, from the very same cause as before named. This brought her to the conclusion that her dear little babe should remain as he was, rather than have a drunken parson to perform upon him, and thus he never got the rite of sprinkling in the Establishment.

As he grew up, he, like all the fallen sons of Adam, soon proved the truth that he was born in his, Adam's image. Adverse circumstances took place in the course of divine providence with William's parents, which was the cause of his having to leave home and go into farm servitude. His master, being a strict churchman, insisted upon all his servants going

to some place of worship. Consequently, William was compelled to go contrary to his will, for he hated in his very heart all profession of religion.

In course of time he became acquainted with a number of card-players, and after their daily occupation was over, they met in the evening as often as possible. O what a sad thing is the first false step, for although William was not led or suffered to go to any great lengths in drunkenness, yet from various temptations and opportunities, he was suffered to go on to greater lengths in other forbidden paths. But I refrain here from particularising. Suffice it to say, it was a source of great trouble and sorrow to him in after days. His mother often warned him of the consequence of his sad career, reasoned and prayed with and for him, for she is believed to have been a God-fearing woman, and it pleased God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith He loved His people even when dead in sin, to hear and answer her many prayers, for William now began to hear the gospel preached in the house of his parents and elsewhere, and proved the power of that scripture which says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

The Word proved quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword in the hands of the blessed Spirit in the conscience of William. His convictions were very deep, feeling the arrow of the Almighty stick fast and the hand of God pressing him sore. Card-playing was at once given up, and his former companions and sinful practices renounced. He now often retired into corners of fields and into dry ditches, out of all human sight, to cry to God, confess his vile sins and plead for mercy. O what a blessed change! "Behold, he prayeth." The change was so great and conspicuous in his life and outward conduct as not only to be seen by his former companions, but by all who knew him, and especially by his dear, affectionate, praying mother, for he sincerely confessed his sins and was enabled to forsake them.

The set time at length came when the Lord in mercy delivered manifestly his soul from death, his eyes from tears and his feet from falling, and now his consolations abounded. To the joy of his soul he felt the spirit of adoption, and sweetly and blessedly experienced the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. Then he desired to tell what a dear Saviour he had found, and he went before the church [at Kirkland, September 7th, 1834], related his experience, and was received and baptized. Being so well known, the members could not but wonder at the grace of God in him, and they exclaimed, "What hath God wrought!"

He was now desirous of settling in life, and having kept company with his (now) widow, she no longer hesitated to take him for her husband, seeing so miraculous a change in him. They were married, and

he took his bride home under his mother's roof, and in the evening of that day, he took up the Bible, read the chapter setting forth the duties of husband and wife, and afterwards kneeling down, prayed most fervently to the Lord that He would enable them by His grace to walk in the commands and precepts of the Lord, and that their union might be made a mutual blessing to each other, both for this life and the life to come. This again added to the joy and comfort of his dear mother, who herself had now become a member of a Particular Baptist church, and I can (as well as many others) bear testimony that the prayers of the son that night have been heard and abundantly answered.

They subsequently travelled miles together on the Lord's day to hear the glorious gospel of the blessed God preached, and William was always found in his place on that day, through all weathers, rain, hail, frost or snow, often blessing and praising a covenant God that He should have magnified the riches of His grace in remembering such a wretch and vile sinner as he was, and plucking him as a brand from the fire, whilst He left his fellow-companions to follow the evil of their own hearts.

The Lord in His providence opened the door by which William became the tenant of a small farm, on which was a large quantity of turf, used much for fuel amongst the farmers and in neighbouring towns and villages. It had lain there for ages, and in some places went yards deep into the ground. William not only farmed his land, but began extensively to cut and dry the turf for sale. Sometimes he would have as many as one hundred or more stacks piled up. It happened at one time that fires being kindled on various parts of the land where the turf was, the wind arose, carried the fire right into the midst of his stacks, and set so many on fire that his loss was considerably above a hundred pounds – a large sum to him.

One day a travelling tradesman called upon his brother, who keeps a shop in the neighbourhood, and addressed him thus: "I hear your brother William has had a great loss of his turf by fire. I leave with you five shillings for him." The first time William called, his brother told him the circumstance and handed him the five shillings. He stood silent for a short time, and then said, "Peter, I cannot take it with a good conscience; but there is T.W. and J.C., poor members of ours. Weigh them each a half-crown's worth of meal or flour, and send it as soon as you can, for I feel sure they need it; but don't say where it came from." The thing was done, and indeed it proved to be needed at both houses, for they afterwards declared they had not a morsel of bread in the house when the provision arrived, and they blessed God for such a signal deliverance. "O what a present help is the Lord in every time of need."

Notwithstanding this severe loss, God blessed William in his basket and store, and preserved him in his going out and coming in. For whilst

the left hand of the Lord appeared to go out against him tenfold, His right hand brought him in twentyfold, and above all his soul was kept humble, watchful and prayerful, so that he was taught to observe these things and to understand the lovingkindness of the Lord in providence and in grace.

God still prospering his handiwork, another trial is at the door. The land agent of a gentleman who had the control of his farm now planned so to raise his moss rent that, if carried out, it would soon take away the most of William's previous hard-gotten gains. When he became acquainted with the circumstance, it took away his rest, peace of mind, sleep and appetite, and one day, pondering over the great injustice about to be inflicted on him, a spirit of prayer came powerfully upon him. He cried to the Lord in his trouble. The Lord heard him, and sent Psalm 37. 1-3 home to his very heart. This made him to rest in hope. But he had not long to wait, for in about a week the gentleman died suddenly, the snare was broken and William escaped, whilst the naked bow of God was so conspicuously made bare on his behalf.

I will now relate a few particulars respecting the church and the chapel where they met at Kirkland. The minister, Mr. John Shaw, dying (of whom there was an account in the 1840 *Gospel Standard*) as in some other places under similar circumstances, contention and strife began, heresies and party spirit sprang up, until at last the trustees had to be called in, William and myself being of the number. The result was that the deacons had to give up their office, and the remaining members proceeded to elect fresh ones, of whom William was chosen one, and remained so up to his death. The congregation, however, began to fall off. Members left and opened another place, where heretical doctrines soon began to be advanced. They went on with zeal for a time, but the end proved that they were "clouds without water," for it was not very long before, like the foolish virgins, their lamps went out and they no longer continued to meet together.

This was indeed a time of severe trial for the original place. William felt pressed out of measure, and wrote to his old friend [presumably Thomas Walsh himself] to come over and help them. His letter moved the heart of his real and tried friend, for God was in it of a truth, as the sequel proved. This friend went, and commenced going twice and sometimes thrice a month. God, who had scattered Israel, now began to gather her. The attendance gradually increased with anxious hearers, until the chapel became nearly filled, numbers coming for miles round. The Lord now began to bear witness to the Word of His grace, some being made willing in the day of His power to give themselves to the Lord and to His people, and in course of time three of William's daughters, a daughter-in-law, and three of his daughters' husbands were baptized and joined the church amongst the rest, and I believe if ever

Psalm 126 was realised in spirit and in truth in our day, it was at this time and at that place, and no one entered into the spirit of it more than William, and indeed none had more reason, for up to the time of his death, like Jacob of old, he would often look back and say with a full heart, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." Annual collections were commenced, his friend always preaching on such occasions, and year after year the collections gradually increased until last year they amounted to the sum of £67 18s. 7d. [an excellent collection then], the people offering most willingly, and none more so than our departed brother, with heart, and soul, and pocket.

His friend being called to labour more abundantly in other parts of the Lord's vineyard, William and his brother deacon were called frequently to speak to the people, one taking the morning, the other the afternoon, and it soon became evident that the Lord blessed their labours to the souls of His people, love and union dwelling amongst them. And so mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed that the people have become respected by most of the surrounding neighbourhood. There has been a new school built, and about eighty scholars are on their books. A new stable to hold seven horses has also been built for the convenience of distant-comers, and last year the burial ground was much enlarged, and all walled in and paid for. William was permitted to see all this. Having known what trouble and warfare were, he was now brought to see and realise the blessings of peace, love, union and concord, for most of his former enemies were brought to be at peace with him.

I must now come to speak of his latter days. He had been repeatedly afflicted in body, and on one occasion it was feared he would not recover, but his time had not then come. He was a man bold and unflinching in the things of God, and a staunch advocate of the doctrines of God's discriminating grace, very sensitive, thoughtful, often in deep meditation, and very anxious in all things he had to do with, secular or religious. He was naturally of a good constitution, which enabled him to bear up under the great pressure he sometimes had to endure when many would have sunk. He had a fine black head of hair, which at one time turned grey very quickly, then came off, and his head, behind as well as before and the top, was as destitute of hair as the ball of the hand. But, singular to state, when all hope had gone of ever having hair again, behold another crop of black hair came upon his head, and again turned grey before his death. I merely state this to show the effect of trouble and anxiety of various kinds.

But the last affliction now came, which was to bring down the tabernacle. His sufferings at times were very great, but his consolations from the great Physician were greater, and although he had to groan, being burdened, yet the Lord was near to support with His everlasting

arms underneath, and He enabled him to say, "I know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The last time he spoke in the chapel on a Lord's day was February 15th, 1874. When giving out hymn 1106, and coming to the last verse, with great solemnity and emphasis he spoke it:

"When I shall launch in worlds unseen,
O may I then be found in Him;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before His throne."

This left an impression on some of the friends that the speaker would not be long before he entered into the solemn reality of that verse, and so it proved.

The day following he managed to get to the chapel to bury one who had once been in church fellowship with him. With difficulty he returned home. A physician was sent for, who consulted with another in attendance, and then said to Mrs. D., "Your husband has a complaint upon him that no human power can cure or be of any real help to." Heavy tidings indeed, but they were received by William with the greatest composure and resignation to the Lord's will. His sufferings became extreme, and the pain very great, which made him often cry out, "O Lord, give me patience! Lord, help me!" And pausing awhile he would then say, "But what are my sufferings to be compared with the sufferings of the dear Lamb of God?" Then again, "Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee." When his family were about his bed, each desiring to do something to alleviate his pains, he would say, "I fear I shall tire you all out. O how God has blessed me and us as a family! O blessed God, I adore Thee, I bless Thee, I thank Thee! What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits towards me? God almighty bless you all. How much better I am attended to than the dear Son of God was!" Again his pains would come on, and he again said,

""Weary of earth, myself, and sin,
Dear Jesus, set me free,
And to Thy glory take me in,
For there I long to be."

"Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Lord, help me, a poor, helpless sinner." Another time, speaking of death, he said. "Death has no terrors for me. Death is swallowed up in the victory of the Son of God! O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

When a friend asked, "Have you any advice to give to the church?" "O no," was his reply. "Look to Jesus, look to Jesus for advice. I am but a poor, helpless sinner. The Lord will be with you and carry on the

cause. He told me so when we were only three of us left." When his pains were a little easier, he said,

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

It was now evident his time could but be short here, and he felt he could give up wife, children, the church, and all into the hands of God, often praying and pouring forth a husband's and father's blessing upon them. The last Lord's day he was on earth, a number of the members went to see him after the afternoon's service, to take a last farewell of him. When they surrounded his poor, weak body, O how he blessed them in the name of the Lord, saying, "Blessed Lord and blessed church! Natural ties and affections are not to be compared to the spiritual love and affection of the Lord's family. You are my real brethren and friends, and Jesus is our Elder Brother." And he then quoted the lines:

"There my best friends, my kindred dwell;
There God my Saviour reigns."

He most affectionately took his leave of them all, asking his brother deacon to engage in prayer, and saying, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Prayer accordingly was offered up to the Lord, and they parted to meet no more in this world, William saying, "We shall meet again in glory." It was a sorrowful parting.

Between this time and his death, he repeated most of hymn 468: "Death is no more a frightful foe." His brother, visiting him for the last time, said, "Well, William, you have often preached and conversed about Christian entering the river. I think you are now in it!" His reply was, "I am; but whilst the priests held the ark of the covenant in the river Jordan, the waters stood on a heap on each side." And he then quoted verse 5, hymn 87: "And when through Jordan's flood," etc. And after a short pause he burst forth with, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." And again:

"But when this lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave," etc.

On being asked how he felt, his reply was, "The nearer my latter end, the brighter my hopes; and soon shall I hear my Jesus say, 'Come, thou blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world.'"

Thus lived and died one of whom I can truly say, "The memory of the just is blessed."

“He often sang, while here below,
 ‘A sinner saved by grace’;
 But now he sings the same above,
 Amongst the ransomed race.”

William Dunderdale has a good number of descendants attending our chapels today – among them the Editor’s wife, and the wife of the Editor of the Friendly Companion.

BOOK REVIEW

The Poor Man’s Commentary on the Old and New Testaments, by Dr. Robert Hawker, published by Solid Ground Christian Books, Birmingham, Alabama, U.S.A.; nine volumes; hardbacks; average 700 pages each; price £199 from Christian Bookshop, Ossett. May also be purchased per volume. Tel: 01924 260502 to discuss.

This was first produced in penny numbers for the poor parishioners of Charles in Plymouth where Robert Hawker was vicar from 1784 unto his death in 1827. He does not expound every verse, but comments as he feels led – sometimes extensively on a verse, sometimes on the passage, and always finishing each chapter with some beautiful reflections. His language is easy to understand. Each chapter of the Bible, with his comments, is excellent for daily reading, like his well-known morning and evening portions.

In his love for the Persons of the holy Trinity and for the God-Man Christ Jesus, his writing has the fragrance of Solomon’s Song. In his valiant stand for the doctrines of sovereign grace he writes in the spirit of the Apostle Paul.

He holds that Jesus and His apostles established the first rule of Biblical interpretation that all the Scriptures testify of Christ. Then the believer’s union with Christ is his key to many passages. Though believers may claim personal innocence before men, their only plea before God is the righteousness of Christ through union with Him. Again, he sets forth Christ as the believer’s sanctification. The old nature is not renewed, gets no better. Sin is mixed with all we do. In Christ’s Person and holiness alone are we separated to communion with the Father. Christ has all the glory. These were the doctrines held by our William Gadsby. And in both men what fruit we see in their burning devotion to Jesus. What loving converse they must have had together for Gadsby to say of Hawker that he was the most godly man he ever met.

We are indebted to the American publishers for one of the most valuable reprints of recent years.

T. Abbott, Ossett

We normally only review books which are sent to us from the publishers, but we are pleased to recommend Dr. Hawker.

Nothing but the death of Christ for us will be the death of sin in us.

Owen

UNTO THE END

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28. 20).

I have a Friend, dearer than all beside,
Who does and ever will for me provide;
Who will protect, preserve, uphold and guide,
Unto the end.

Though sorrows, snares and trials do beset,
I have His word, which ne'er has failed me yet:
I'll never leave thee, nor thy soul forget,
Unto the end.

His promise is, I am with you alway,
In darkness and in light, by night, by day,
And well I know He with my soul will stay,
Unto the end.

Dear ones I love, yet dear ones often fail,
And love grows cold along this chilling vale;
This Friend alone remains unchangeable,
Unto the end.

He does my bitterest cup with blessings fill,
And fierce opposers can but do His will.
Though foes are near, He will be nearer still,
Unto the end.

I cannot stand alone, though oft I try;
A helpless, weak and worthless worm am I,
But daily strength I know He will supply,
Unto the end.

Lord, may I trust, though faith does oft give way,
That Thou through Jordan will my soul convey,
And all Thy mercy, love and grace display,
When at the end.

Then when that dreaded, icy stream is past,
And in Thy likeness I arise at last,
At Thy dear, sacred feet my crown I'll cast,
World without end.

May Shayler

The grace of God when viewed, as it always ought to be, in connection with the wretched state of sinful man, shines like the beauteous rainbow on the darkened cloud. Its lovely hues cheer and delight the mind in the midst of surrounding gloom.

Thomas Reade

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
OCTOBER 2009

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

A CERTAIN WOMAN NAMED LYDIA

*Sermon preached by Herbert Dawson of Bethersden,
probably about 1947*

Text: “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16. 14).

Lydia was a unique character. You will find if you read the Acts of the Apostles for yourselves, and search out the dealings of God with Lydia, that she can be looked upon as the first known European convert. This is the first recorded instance of one in Europe being born again, and this honour fell to Lydia.

“And a certain woman named Lydia.” God so arranged matters concerning Lydia that, although an inhabitant of the city of Thyatira, she had to take a journey and be found at Philippi; and it was also in God’s purposes that the Apostle Paul should go to Philippi too. If time allowed, it would be instructive to trace out how this engagement of the Apostle Paul at Philippi was made. You will find if you read the account that the Apostle Paul was very concerned as to the spots and places where the Lord his God would have him go on the business of preaching the gospel, and there are some solemn statements recorded about this matter.

You will notice a word or two like this: “When they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia” – a very solemn thing is this – “forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not.” Although the Apostle Paul had it in his mind to go to such places, some in Asia and some in Bithynia, yet the Lord overturned it and overruled it, because there was an underlying purpose to be revealed. A vision appeared to Paul in the night. “There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.” And after he had seen the vision, immediately he endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called him to preach the gospel there. You will find that the thing worked out well.

The Apostle Paul had a safe journey, came to Macedonia, and thence to Philippi, and then the Word of God tells us: “And we were in

that city abiding certain days.” The Apostle Paul waited for the moving of the cloud. “And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.” And the Lord so arranged it that in this congregation of women by the river side a certain woman named Lydia should be present. It was the time appointed in God’s purposes that Lydia should have her heart and her ear opened, and that the truth of God should be made a living power in her conscience.

It is no small mercy when the Lord deals with sinners like this. How many of you could appeal to the God of all grace at this time that He has opened your ear and your heart, so that you are a relation of Lydia, as it were, a brother or sister?

“Whose heart the Lord opened.” It would be very difficult for a preacher to suggest what motives moved Lydia to leave Thyatira and take a journey to Philippi. It might have been business. “A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple.” She might have gone on her way to Philippi with the idea of doing business, or she might have had a thought like this, that she would journey to Philippi to have “a good time” as the worldling understands it, following the dictates of the carnal mind. But whatever her designs and her thoughts were, the Lord overruled them. The designs of the Lord were that Lydia should be born again, and when such a design is locked up in God’s purposes, the time comes when it is brought to pass. So you find the Apostle Paul at Philippi, and the dear man is given a message, and here is Lydia, a hearer.

In my judgment there is something striking about this statement: “A certain woman named Lydia ... which worshipped God, heard us.” How many sermons some of you have heard, and it may be you have not heard one yet. You have heard hundreds, yes hundreds of sermons, and yet what has all the preaching of the gospel done for you? You have heard, it is true, and yet you have *not* heard, and that is true also. Strange paradox; solemn fact! You have heard the preacher’s voice, you have heard the text announced, you have heard the statements made, you have heard the truths declared, you have heard Jesus Christ preached, you have heard many things set forth, precious things to people sitting round about you; but although you have heard, yet you have *not* heard; that is, you have not heard for yourself. Here is the first thing to look into, and leaving Lydia for a little while, let us come to your case and my case.

God was pleased to do a wonderful thing in Lydia’s breast: “Whose heart the Lord opened.” Something in the preaching of the Apostle Paul at this time came with divine power in her heart, stirred up her conscience, and brought her to realise what she was as a sinner before God. It made her realise that the Apostle Paul was preaching the gospel, not only to a congregation, but to herself in particular. Some of you have

at times realised what that is. You have thought that the preacher aimed at you. It is not you personally, but your character he has set forth. The preacher does not design you. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." But sometimes as the preacher is helped by the Spirit of God to preach, you will find he describes your case, what you are the subject of, and you will hear to purpose and profit.

Then you will feel, "The watchmen that go about the city found me," and if they find you, take courage. The watchmen do not go round about outside the city; they go inside the city, dealing with the case of Zion's citizens. If from time to time you hear, and find you are the subject of the things spoken of, and have the marks of Zion's citizens as traced out by the watchmen, then you have the mercy of being taught as Lydia was. You have an opened heart and opened ear, and come under the blessing. "Blessed are ... your ears, for they hear." "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound."

When Lydia began to listen, she may not have thought much of the Apostle Paul as he spoke. The Word of God tells us that "his presence was weak, and his speech contemptible," and she may have thought at first, "What can such a man have to say?" Many hearers have been prejudiced against God's servants at first, and later have gained a blessing indeed under their ministry.

What a mercy that as the apostle went on preaching, Lydia heard! What did she hear? I have no doubt that the Apostle Paul preached about the Adam Fall to begin with; that is, to put the sinner down in the solemn place to which the Adam Fall has brought him, and to show there is no good in man whatever. Not many people can hear such teaching nowadays, but there still remain some who do hear it, and when the preacher sets forth what God is as a just and holy God, that He will not look upon sin with any degree of allowance, and that "Cursed is every one which continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them," there are people to be found still that hear these truths and believe them. When the preacher sets forth this:

"Not the labour of my hands,
Can fulfil Thy law's demands,"

and, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh living be justified," there are people that hear such things still and believe them to be the truth about themselves.

Alas, so many people hear with a kind of general hearing. If you are taught of God as Lydia was, you come to hear for yourself, and the Lord will bless you. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." How do you come to the house of prayer? It is a mercy to come with willing feet; it is a mercy to come

to hear; it is a mercy to join with the psalmist and say, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak," to say, "Speak to me for my good; speak to me for my profit; speak to me for my edification."

To come to hear to purpose is a blessed evidence of being taught of God as Lydia was. Lydia "heard us." What happened? Lydia realised that what the Apostle Paul set forth was the truth – not only the truth about those around her, but the truth concerning herself. Have you realised it? Lydia heard, and the outcome was that her heart was opened, and then she realised what was in her heart, and not until then. I will guarantee she could have told you this was seen, and known, and felt by her:

"Defiled I am indeed;
Defiled throughout by sin;
Thy purple fountain, Lord, I need,
To wash a leper clean."

You may depend that the experience of the publican came to be Lydia's: "God be merciful to me a sinner."

"Lydia ... heard us." "Whose heart the Lord opened." What happened? Not only was a conviction of sin, a realisation of her state as a sinner begotten in her heart, but there was this: prayer. From that moment Lydia was taught to pray, and she began to pray from the sense of need. She began to call upon the name of the Lord like Jabez: "O that Thou wouldest bless me indeed!" She began to beg that she might have a saving knowledge of the truth that the Apostle Paul had set forth. Some of you may remember when you had to go on your way after the service into some secret place alone. There may be many hidden corners that would speak of this, if such could speak. You began to beg of the Lord that you might know for yourself the blessed gospel you had listened to, that you might not miss the saving knowledge of it. You felt,

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

Like Lydia you heard, and having heard, you began to pray, and you began to feel.

You see, a good hearing is a feeling hearing. Whether it brings comfort or conviction, it matters not as regards its being a good hearing. A good hearing is a feeling one, whether it be to rebuke you or to bless you, and you will feel both if you are born again. You will feel what it is to be cut down and to be lifted up, and your chief trouble will proceed from this: that you have a very wicked heart – a heart that the Lord has opened. What a mercy!

I have no doubt also that the Apostle Paul spoke much of Jesus Christ, and if any man could speak well of Jesus Christ, he was that man.

“Christ Jesus,” he said, “came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” It was as though he said, “If you want to know what a Saviour Jesus is, if you want to know that He is mighty to save, look at me. The mercy of God reached me, that I might be a pattern in all ages to come that He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, and who can tell but what God will be gracious unto you?” And so Lydia heard, and you may depend that she believed this. When the Apostle Paul began to speak of Jesus Christ, who He was, what He was, setting forth His glorious Person, Lydia received it in the love of it, and believed it, and like the Apostle Peter she could testify, “We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”

So with this opened heart Lydia began to realise that Jesus Christ was precious, and if you had asked her, “What think ye of Christ?” she would have tried to tell you something about it. She might have told you something like this:

“To me Christ is more precious far
Than life and all its comforts are.”

Another thing: when Lydia’s heart was opened, godly fear was put into it, and on whatever lines she had run her business before, if it was not on right lines, godly fear produced a revolution. What a mercy it is when godly fear is put into a sinner’s heart, prompting and producing a tender conscience, so that one says, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!” and like Nehemiah, “So did not I, because of the fear of God.”

“Whose heart the Lord opened.” Another thing must have happened in Lydia’s case when her ear and her heart was opened: it must have produced a revolution in her life. Whoever the people were that Lydia got in touch with, in the market place, in business, in her friendships, all her concerns from this time forward were on a new basis. A line of demarcation was drawn. It was her concern to have a conscience void of offence towards all men, and to be right in God’s sight. Godly fear would produce this, for “by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.”

In this opened heart of Lydia’s there was also a living faith. Everyone taught of God is given a living faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. If you read in the New Testament the experience of some of the characters the Lord Jesus dealt with, O what wonderful faith you will find was often given to some of the most unlikely! Look at Bartimaeus. The people said to Bartimaeus, “Jesus of Nazareth” – a Man. This refers to His humanity – “Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.” But Bartimaeus had his heart opened, and although he was naturally blind, he had spiritual eyesight, and he spoke like this: “Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” Here is a living faith, and you may depend that Lydia in her

opened heart had a living faith in Jesus Christ, although it may be she could not put her thoughts into words. She had the feeling, and that is a great thing. Some people have a true and warm heart for Jesus Christ and are on the Lord's side, and yet they could not define articles of faith if you were to press them to do so, but such characters have the "root of the matter," and that is the point of vital importance.

"Whose heart the Lord opened." And this would be found in Lydia's heart: love. It may be when the Apostle Paul began to preach that Lydia felt her heart churned up. There have been people who have gone to a chapel to hear a preacher of the gospel, and when the man has begun to speak, enmity has stirred; but before the preacher has got to the end, all that enmity has been subdued, and they have realised it was the truth.

If you love the truth, you have an opened heart, one that the Lord has opened. You cannot open your own heart to hear and receive the truth with love. The heart is barred and bolted against the truth of God, and as for a man undoing the door to let the Lord Jesus in, you may depend if anything is to be done in a sinner's heart in this way, God alone can do it. He has the keys, and He opens, and when He opens the heart He puts love into it, love of the truth. Many have come to the house of prayer and listened to the truth and have made up their minds that when they were old enough they would have no more to do with it. Some of us remember our youthful days and how we looked at the clock and wished the "Amen" would come. The whole thing was irksome. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

When the heart is opened, love is dropped in, love of the truth, and you look with new eyes on those who preach it, and upon all that love the truth. You account them to be the "excellent of the earth," and you feel,

"With them numbered may I be,
Now and through eternity."

And how you love the house of prayer then! Do you not think that Lydia wanted to go down by the river side again? Do you not think she searched to find out whether Paul would be preaching again, that she might hear more of those blessed things concerning Jesus Christ and His salvation?

"Whose heart the Lord opened," and that brought her an appetite for the truth. It is often noticeable what a keen appetite there is for the truth in the days of spiritual youth, what willingness to go where the gospel is preached, and what eagerness to hear. You look back on it in later life and often have to say as Job did, "O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness!" It is sweet to have

such choice memories and look back on past Ebenezers. You cannot feel at home until your heart is opened. Here was Lydia's case then. Is it yours and mine?

I like this line of things: "She attended unto the things which were spoken." We talk of gracious people, and we put questions to each other sometimes, such as this when we meet those who are strangers: "Where do you attend?" You say, "I attend this, or that place." I will tell you this: it is not so much the place you attend, as to *what* you attend. The Word of God tells us, "She attended unto the things which were spoken." If you realise this, and attend to the things which are spoken, if you heed the line of things in the Acts of the Apostles, you will be found where a free grace gospel is preached, where Jesus Christ is exalted as the sinner's salvation, where baptism by immersion is practised, and where "the things most surely believed among us" are contended for. You will rejoice to be found where such a gospel is preached.

Some of you have attended a cause of truth many years, but the great thing is this: Lydia *attended* to the things which were spoken of Paul. How does this affect you and me? If your heart is opened, it will prompt an obedient walk. One thing the Apostle Paul would speak about would be separation from the world and a godly, consistent life. He would contend for that, and these are things one born again would attend to; yea to live so that people may take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus.

Again, in the church of God one would attend unto the things concerning a profession of the name of Jesus, and daily labour under the solemn responsibility of it. In business life also, there are things to be attended to, and it is good to live so that it might be spoken of you: "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." There are many things to be attended to, but the hymnwriter seems to embrace all in his prayer:

"Order my footsteps by Thy Word,
And make my heart sincere;
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,
But keep my conscience clear."

O that you might possess that grace given to Lydia: "She attended unto the things which were spoken"!

Among the "things spoken," baptism was one which the apostle brought forward, and Lydia attended to this, and being the character "whose heart the Lord opened," her obedience in thus following in the steps of that Jesus whom Paul preached must have solemnly assured the apostle that he was divinely led to Philippi.

Look how it worked out: "And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful

to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.” Do you not think Lydia found it a great delight to do whatever lay in her power for Paul’s comfort, out of love to Jesus Christ and love of the truth he preached? I think it was one of the best houses the Apostle Paul ever stayed in. I judge Lydia moved the house from top to bottom that God’s servant might feel at home. Some of you are glad to show kindness to God’s servants sometimes; you are glad to get into touch with those who preach the truth, and to do what is in your power for them, to give “a cup of cold water,” and you do it for Christ’s sake because you feel a union to such characters.

I have set before you Lydia’s case, and the Word of God concerning it is plain. If you know what Lydia’s opened heart is, if it is your solemn exercise to attend unto the things which are spoken in the gospel still, remember this: “And ... she was baptized.” Still the gospel exhortation is: “If ye love Me, keep My commandments.” May He who opened Lydia’s heart enable each one taught of God to attend to this. Amen.

IS THE KEEPING OF THE LORD’S DAY OBLIGATORY UPON THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH?

By Gerald D. Buss

One of the distinguishing features of our denomination is that we contend that the gospel is our rule of life rather than the law. In so doing we in no way demur from any of the commandments given in the moral law, but we see them in the light of Calvary rather than Mount Sinai. Indeed, the Lord Jesus Christ taught that any who should teach that it is lawful to break any of these commandments would be called least in the kingdom of heaven. He said of Himself that He came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am come not to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5. 17-19).

It is also very important to remember that the Holy Ghost, writing through His servant John, said, “For sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3. 4). Thus the definition of sin is the same in the New Testament as the Old Testament. The gospel will never lead a man to sin. Paul, writing to the Romans, declares: “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What

then? shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Rom. 6. 14, 15). As one man so aptly put it: "The Ten Commandments are like a mirror. You look in the mirror to see if your face is dirty, but you don't take the mirror to wash your face."

This is what Paul means when he says, "But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (1 Tim. 1. 8). The principle of the law is "do this and live" whereas that of the gospel is life first and then its fruits. Sinai's covenant never made any provision to help the sinner obey, nor can it do any other than curse the law-breaker, however minor the offence may seem to be in some people's eyes. The Lord through the gospel, on the other hand, does command, but makes a blessed provision of grace to enable the child of God to walk in obedience for love's sake, and has provided an Advocate for the sinner who is brought to humble confession of sin. James calls this gospel rule, the perfect law of liberty: "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty [a more perfect mirror even than the law] and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1. 25).

The point is then made that whilst specific mention is made in the New Testament of nine of the commandments of the Decalogue, yet that which speaks of the Sabbath day is not directly referred to. Some have inferred from this that it is no longer required of believers to keep the Sabbath day, in that every day should be a Sabbath.

Others have gone further and have openly disregarded the keeping of the Sabbath day, quoting the above doctrine that we are no longer under the law and hence are free to do as we wish. Such reasoning displays a solemn lack of understanding, as it does despite to the precious truth that it is the Spirit of Christ in a believer which has delivered him from the covenant of works. If the dear Redeemer came to fulfil the law for us, are we to disregard it? It is the Spirit of Christ of which Paul speaks in Romans 8, especially when he refers to the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in us. It is a solemn reproach upon the Lord Jesus Christ to suggest that His Spirit in a child of God would lead him to neglect any of the revealed will of God. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8. 4).

It is also very significant that many of the Lord's people have been convinced of the sin of Sabbath breaking at the beginning of their spiritual life. Surely it cannot be that the sinner, being now delivered from the covenant of works, finds a freedom to commit one of the very sins that first was laid on the conscience. We have a wonderful example of this in *Grace Abounding*: John Bunyan speaks of how he was convicted of the sin of playing "tipcat" on the green at Elstow on the

Sabbath day. "But the same day, as I was in the midst of a game of cat, and having struck it one blow from the hole, just as I was about to strike it the second time, a voice did suddenly dart from heaven into my soul, which said, Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell? At this I was put to an exceeding maze; wherefore leaving my cat upon the ground, I looked up to heaven, and was as if I had with the eyes of my understanding seen the Lord Jesus looking down upon me, as being very hotly displeased with me, and as if He did severely threaten me with some grievous punishment for these and other my ungodly practices." (*Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners.*)

Having later received his pardon at the foot of the cross, we do not find John Bunyan feeling to be at liberty to resume his Sabbath breaking. True, the principle of his observance is now different. Under the law it was an onerous task, one that he could never rightly fulfil, for the commandment extends to an observance within the heart as well as an outward abstaining from worldly affairs. But having been delivered from the bondage of the law, Bunyan found the Sabbath a delight!

So what is the Scriptural teaching of the New Testament Sabbath?

Firstly, we must remember that the original keeping of the Sabbath was ordained at the time of the completion of creation. "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made" (Gen. 2. 2, 3).

The point has been made that it was the principle of resting *one day in seven* that God established at creation, and that though the day is changed in the New Testament dispensation, the principle is inviolate. So being a creation ordinance, it preceded the giving of the law on Sinai. No doubt Adam and Eve would have taught their sons the divine command to rest on the seventh day of the week. It was thus observed throughout the generations which preceded the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. It was also, as the Lord Jesus said in His earthly ministry, a precious gift to mankind: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2. 27).

Secondly, it was indeed reinforced on Mount Sinai. (It is then named the Sabbath.) "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed

it" (Exod. 20. 8-11). It is important to note that the Lord's words here speak of a creation ordinance. Also the very use of the word *remember* implies that this ordinance had preceded the Mosaic covenant.

In Deuteronomy (which is the Hebrew for "Second Law"), another reason was added for its observance, namely for the Israelites to remember that they had been brought out of Egyptian bondage to a place of rest as a nation: "Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day" (Deut. 5. 12-15).

Both of these reasons for Sabbath observance remain especially for the New Testament believer. The creation ordinance reminds us of our accountability to our Creator, and the deliverance from bondage, a type of the redeeming love of the Lord Jesus Christ, which should be a sacred reason for those who fear God to set this day apart, not in a legal way, but in love to the Redeemer.

But then it is rightly pointed out that we do not remember the seventh day but the first day of the week as the Sabbath. Why is this?

1. On that day, the first day of the week, the Lord Jesus rose from the dead; hence it is now called the Lord's day. John said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Rev. 1. 10).

2. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself after His resurrection sanctified this day by appearing to His disciples on several occasions.

3. It is evident that according to Paul and John that the first day of the week had become the Christian Sabbath very early in the New Testament church. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (1 Cor. 16. 2). "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them..." (Acts 20. 7). For two thousand years the New Testament church has kept the Lord's day, or first day of the week, as a day of rest, rather than the Jewish Sabbath of the seventh day.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ, as Lord of the Sabbath, has an undisputed right to ordain the change of day. In so doing He emphasised that the believer is not under the covenant of works but under the covenant of grace. However the creation ordinance was continued, albeit on the first

rather than the seventh day of the week. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7. 12). "For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day" (Matt. 12. 8).

The next question which should be asked is how are we to keep this precious day?

That the keeping of the Sabbath has been an untold blessing to the church of God, and to nations who have observed it, is an undisputable fact. The solemn and dreadful decline of morals in our land can be directly related to the blatant disregard of the Lord's command in this. Of course, the Pharisees had turned the Sabbath by their man-made traditions into a day of bondage. This our Lord often sharply reproved them for, and we would not follow their example in that. However, where the Lord has begun a work of His grace, and where love to Christ is in living exercise, it will be no onerous duty to refrain from all unnecessary duties on that day, and give the hours to the Lord. An awakened conscience will know, without any laws being laid down, that to try and serve God *and* our own pleasures on that day is grieving to the Spirit. We are exhorted in Hebrews 10. 25: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." We keep the Lord's day in love to our Lord Jesus Christ, not as a legal duty under the covenant of works, but in faith which worketh by love.

It thus betrays a very sad lack of grace and discernment when one or two people quote the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith on these matters as a justification for a blatant disregard of the Lord's day as a sanctified day of rest. To attend a service on the Lord's day morning, and then spend the afternoon playing or watching sports, for example, and then perhaps attending God's house again in the evening, is serving God and mammon, which the Lord Jesus declares is impossible. For parents to take their children to worship, and then afterwards allow them to spend the day playing with their toys or friends is not bringing their children up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, as we are commanded. Unnecessary travel on the Lord's day is becoming increasingly common, taking away from its sanctity. Holidays can become a particular snare in this respect. The Lord's day should not be sacrificed for our pleasure.

Brethren, these things ought not so to be. For many years, the Gospel Standard churches have been noted for their adherence to the Sabbath principle. It is sadly evident that due to our national sins, and even more because of our denominational and personal sins, that there is a consequent withholding of the power and unction of the Holy Spirit in the ministry. The Lord's day has become more and more loosely observed in some quarters, and as a consequence the spirit of the world

is flooding into the church. Where this is so, vital godliness becomes more and more excluded.

Surely the gospel law does not contradict the gracious admonition of Isaiah 58. 13, 14: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

It becomes church members especially to set a consistent example in this regard, that the name of Christ be not reproached by a careless profession of "that worthy name which we bear."

Above all else may we remember the true gospel meaning of the Sabbath as expressed by Joseph Hart:

"To all God's people now remains
A Sabbatism, a rest from pains,
And works of slavish kind;
When tired with toil, and faint through fear,
The child of God can enter here,
And sweet refreshment find.

"To this, by faith, he oft retreats;
Bondage and labour quite forgets,
And bids his cares adieu;
Slides softly into promised rest,
Reclines his head on Jesus' breast
And proves the Sabbath true.

"This, and this only is the way
To rightly keep the Sabbath day,
Which God has holy made.
All keepers that come short of this,
The substance of the Sabbath miss,
And grasp an empty shade."

"There remaineth therefore a rest [margin reading: a keeping of the Sabbath] to the people of God" (Heb. 4. 9).

It is when God's people are taken home to glory that they completely enter into the full experience of the Sabbath rest in the gospel sense.

"But to sing the 'rest remaining,'
Mortal tongues far short must fall;
Heavenly tongues are ever aiming,
But they cannot tell it all;
Faith believes it – hope expects it –
But it overwhelms them all."

CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOUR

By J.K. Popham, 1911

Holiness of practice, what is it? It is not a set of feelings. It is a course of conduct, and it comprises several particulars, as first, *abstention from the appearance of evil* (1 Thess. 5. 22). Mix not with what appears to be wrong; ask not how far you can go in that which even the world blames. What moral, worldly men blame, should it not be eschewed by professing Christians? Where the worldling would not go, should the Christian think of going? Just think of it – “*the appearance*” that which looks wrong. You may say, “O but my conscience does not accuse me; my motives are not bad.” *That rule is not permitted you.* No man has a right, professing the name of Jesus Christ, to go on that ground. It is ungracious ground; it is false ground, unholy, untender ground. It is the excuse of the flesh; it is the deception of the heart, the hypocrisy of the mind, the pollution of Satan. It is not good ground. Whether your conscience accuses you or not is not the question (though, by the way, I might say that perhaps the reason why your conscience does not accuse you is that it is very much hardened; and if so, then your case is much worse). O “*follow holiness*” by keeping from the appearance of sin. Let me repeat it: what the world condemns, do not touch.

Secondly, *abstention from actual wrong*. “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?” (Prov. 6. 27). Can you touch pitch and not be defiled? Can you walk in what God forbids and be innocent? Can you join yourself to any wrong thing, anything that appears wrong to the world, that the world would condemn, and be innocent in that union? No. And think of the effect upon others. Think of the effect upon your brethren if you walk in wrong. Why, it stumbles them, it stumbles tender people; it reproaches the church of Christ and brings evil. Therefore, abstain from every evil. Be jealous of God’s honour, of His Christ. Be jealous of His holy gospel, of His holy promise, and walk so as that the finger of reproach shall never be justly pointed at you, and unjustly at the gospel through your conduct. If you are spoken against, let it be falsely; then a blessing shall attend you according to Christ’s Word. But if it be justly, woe to you, for if you be the Lord’s child, then you will smart for what you do. His rod shall make you know what an evil thing and bitter it is to go where He has told you not to go, to walk in what He has forbidden.

What? will you touch that which is sin? Will you knowingly do that which you know the Lord has forbidden? Would you do that? Then you are not following holiness, and if a child of God, O what is before you God only knows. You are not walking as the Lord commands you to do.

Follow holiness, leave off everything that is evil – *all lying*: “Putting away lying.” “Lie not one to another.” “Speak every man truth with his neighbour.” “Love the truth and peace.” (Eph. 4. 25; Col. 3. 9; Zech. 8. 19). These things are not for nothing spoken; dear friends, they are not given to us for nothing. The Lord knew well our base, false nature, the hypocrisy and lying that we have in it; and therefore He said to His saints, Do not practise that; speak the truth; let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay. Walk so; follow this holiness – separation from the world that lieth in wickedness.

Follow holiness in those particulars. Follow holiness *in all your dealings with men*, so that if they know your religion, if they know your strict and particular belief and hate it, and express their hatred of it, there yet may be extorted from their unwilling lips a testimony of the goodness and uprightness of your life. Happy the man whose dealings with men are equal to his profession before God! It *ought* to be so. I touched upon this important subject just now, in speaking of masters and servants.

Then come also to closer relationships in life. What of the *husband*? The Scripture tells him what to do, that he is to cherish his wife and give her the honour that is due to the weaker vessel; that he and she are one flesh; that he is in all faithfulness to attend to her, leaving all others, leaving his father and his mother and being “joined unto his wife; and they two shall be one flesh” (Eph. 5. 31). And says Paul, “No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church” (verse 29). That is the Scripture, and he who breaks it, if he be a child of God, will get broken for his breaking of it, in some way.

And what of the *wife*? Yes, it is said to her that she is to obey her husband in all things in the Lord. She in her wifely duties has the Word of God to teach her. She must behave herself, comport herself consistently with that relationship that is the nearest, and dearest, and sweetest of all the relationships the earth knows. Husband and wife are to follow holiness, as when the wife prays to be enabled to fulfil her duties, and the husband begs for grace to enable him to do that which is enjoined upon him in the Scriptures. What sorrow of heart has the breach of this precept occasioned some good men for many years after the sin has been forgiven! It is godly sorrow that “worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of” (2 Cor. 7. 10). The shame, the carefulness, the indignation, the vehement desire, the zeal, the revenge, which follow a breach of this branch of holiness they, through grace, have had.

Follow holiness, too, in that *external conduct* which attaches or should attach to every professor of the name of the holy child Jesus. “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”

(2 Tim. 2. 19). *Parents* are addressed. The father, he is not to provoke his children lest they be discouraged, but he is to tell his children about the Lord's goodness; he is to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, admonishing them in that great, that good commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exod. 20. 12).

That belongs to us who are parents, and in very substance belongs to all *children*. You children who are still with your parents, do tenderly regard God's Word. It is a solemn thing for children to disregard parents. Disobedience to parents is one of the crying sins of today, and it is one that the Apostle Paul mentions. Disobedience to parents is mentioned together with unthankfulness and unholiness. O children, regard your parents tenderly; obey them constantly. Obey them because the Lord has told you to do so, and do not forget that disobedience to parents is a sin which God will punish; and where He forgives it by the blood of Christ, there are often times and things which make the child in later days (perhaps when he himself is a parent) remember the sins of his youth. Often he may have to say to his heavenly Father, "Remember not the sins of my youth" (Psa. 25. 7); remember not against me former transgressions. Here I speak out of a painful experience. It is a bitter thing to sin against God and transgress His holy Word.

And then in the next place, follow holiness in all *your conduct in the church* as professors. Follow holiness – separation from every evil thing; as for instance, obeying them that have the rule over you, for they admonish you, and "they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13. 17). That is God's word, and although I speak as a pastor of this church, I would say to you, "Mind that word." I do not say it because I have had any reason to smart under any disregard of it amongst you. I would bless God with humility that He has been so kind to me, a weak, unworthy pastor. But who knows what I may come into? May I be kept from giving any occasion of stumbling. Do not forget that scripture: "Obey them that have the rule over you." No pastor's rule lies in an external rule over the mind, will, judgment, conscience or estates of his people. It lies in this: the unction of the ministry, which will bring them to the obedience of Christ. It lies thus in God's power. I would not give a straw for the external authority of a minister, if he should not possess also, and chiefly, the authority that the affection of the people willingly gives him, from the power and unction of the Word in their hearts. Other than that I never sought, as far as I know myself.

Follow holiness in this also: *be careful one of another*, be tender one for another, mind each other's wealth. "Look not ... on his own things,

but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2. 4). Follow holiness in *obedience to the precepts*. One of them is: "Exhort one another daily, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10. 25). And again, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him" (Lev. 19. 17). Remember those things. They come from heaven and are not to be disregarded. You are to look on the wealth of your friend, your brother, your neighbour, to look after his growth in grace. If you see him wrong, walking in any wrong thing, go to him and tell him; if he shall offend you, tell him his fault privately. Do these things; follow these things. Because the world goes otherwise, you must be separate. God has called you to holiness (1 Thess. 4. 7), to act from other principles than the world's and with other ends.

Follow this holiness. We are to treat each other with all uprightness and all purity. The aged men and deacons are to be grave; the elder women are to be treated as mothers, and the younger as sisters in the Lord, with all purity. These things God has enjoined on us, and he who disregards them at all walks improperly, walks against the Lord, and the Lord will walk against him in some way sooner or later for doing so.

And how shall you enter heaven without a *proper walk*? Though not by the merit of a proper walk, yet by the testimony of a good work your faith will be justified. Abraham was justified by works (Jas. 2. 20-23). Think of it, dear friends. Do you complain of bondage? Do you complain that you are walking in darkness, that God hides His face notwithstanding your confessions and your prayers to Him? Now examine your conduct; go into your soul, and say to it, "What are you doing? How are you living?" Then go to your walk. What is it? Is it such as even the world would disapprove? Then ask no longer why the former days were better than these, for therein you do not enquire wisely. Rather charge yourself no longer to walk in that which dishonours God's truth, and name, and church, and brings bondage and wounding to your soul, and guilt and defilement on your conscience.

Without a gracious walk, what is a profession? Without straight feet, what is a glib tongue? What are prayers, if the conduct is not right? No man shall see the Lord without his heart, his spirit, his mind and his conduct being all of a piece. Grace saves *from* sin. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" And "how shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6. 1-3). Dear friends, if you live in sin, you are not dead to it – you are its servants. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (verse 16). Three things must accord: heart, lip, life; these make up a man.

Now take this exhortation by God's help to yourselves, as I would take it to myself. Let us examine not only what we believe, but how we are living. Let us continually seek to abstain from the appearance of evil, and to turn away from all wrong things; things which not only God condemns, but which appearance may condemn, and which men if they saw would condemn. Only thus living have we any right to talk of experience in divine things or to mention Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the Lord help us, help us individually, help us as a church to hate evil, to hate the garment spotted by the flesh, and to fear doing anything that would bring a reproach to Christ, to His church, anything that would bring the frown of God, that would bring it danger. The good Lord make us fear where we should fear, help us where we need help, strengthen us where we need strengthening, purge us, cleanse and save us, and grant us His smile and His presence.

HEARING THE WORD

From Heaven Taken by Storm by Thomas Watson

The second duty of religion wherein we must provoke ourselves is in hearing of the Word. We may bring our bodies to the Word with ease, but not our hearts without offering violence to ourselves. When we come to the Word preached, we come about a business of the highest importance; therefore we should stir up ourselves and hear with the greatest devotion. Constantine the Emperor was noted for his reverent attention to the Word. "All the people were very attentive to hear him" (Luke 19. 48). In the Greek it is, they hanged upon his lip. When the Word is dispensed, we are now to lift up the everlasting doors of our hearts that the King of Glory may enter in.

1. How far are they from offering violence to themselves in hearing who scarce mind what is said, as if they were not at all concerned in the business. They come to church more for custom than conscience. "They come to thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them" (Ezek. 33. 31). If we could tell them of a rich purchase, or of some place of preferment, they would diligently attend, but when the Word of life is preached, they disregard it.

2. How far are they from offering violence to themselves in hearing who come to the Word in a dull, drowsy manner, as if they came to church to take a receipt [recipe] to make them sleep. The Word is to feed; it is strange to sleep at meat. The Word judgeth men; it is strange for a prisoner to fall asleep at the bar. To such sleepy hearers God may

say, Sleep on. He may suffer them to be so stupified that no ordinance shall awaken them. "While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares" (Matt. 13. 25). The devil is never asleep, but sows the tares of sin in a drowsy hearer.

That we may, when we come to the Word, offer violence to ourselves and stir up ourselves to hear with devotion, consider,

1. It is God that speaks to us. If a judge give a charge upon the bench, all listen. If a king speaks, all give attention. When we come to the Word, we should think thus with ourselves: we are to hear God in this preacher. Therefore Christ is said now to speak to us from heaven (Heb. 12. 25). Christ speaks in His ministers as a king speaketh in the person of his ambassador. When Samuel knew it was the Lord that spake to him, he lent an ear. "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3. 9). They who slight God speaking in His Word shall hear Him speaking in His wrath. "Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath" (Psa. 2. 5).

2. Let us consider the weightiness of the matters delivered to us. As Moses said to Israel, "I call heaven and earth to record this day ... that I have set before you life and death" (Deut. 30. 19). We preach to men of Christ, and the eternal recompences; here are the *magnalia legis*, the weighty matters of the law; and doth not all this call for serious attention? There is a great deal of difference between a letter of news read to us, and a letter of special business wherein our whole land and estate is concerned. In the Word preached, our salvation is concerned; here we are instructed to the kingdom of God, and if ever we will be serious, it should be now. "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" (Deut. 32. 47).

3. If the Word be not regarded, it will not be remembered. Many complain they cannot remember. Here is the reason: God punisheth their carelessness in hearing with forgetfulness. He suffers Satan to take away the Word from them. The fowls of the air came and devoured the seed (Matt. 13. 4). The devil is no recusant [one who refuses to come to church]. He comes to church, but it is not for any good intent; he gets away the word from men! How many have been robbed of the sermon and their souls both at once.

4. It may be the last time that ever God will speak to us in His Word. It may be the last sermon that ever we shall hear, and we may go from the place of hearing to the place of judging. Did people think thus when they come into the house of God, perhaps this will be the last time that God will counsel us about our souls, the last time that ever we shall see our minister's face, with what devotion would they come! How would their affections be all on fire in hearing! We give great attention to the last speeches of friends; a parent's dying words are received as

oracles. O let all this provoke us to diligence in hearing! Let us think this may be the last time that Aaron's bell shall sound in our ears, and before another day, we shall be in another world.

THOUGHTS FROM J.C. PHILPOT

Unless the trumpet give a certain sound, who is to prepare himself for the battle? I want no new doctrines, nor any new religion, as I want no fresh Bible and no new Lord; all I want is to live more daily in the sweet enjoyment of them, and to manifest more of their power in heart, lip and life.

We are no longer young. Life is, as it were, slipping from under our feet, and therefore I desire to spend the rest of my days, be they few or many, in serving the Lord, walking in His fear, enjoying His presence, preaching His gospel, contending for His truth and living to His glory. It is a poor life to live to sin, self and the world, but it is a blessed life to live unto the Lord. I only wish that I could do so more and more, but I have to find that the good I would I do not, and the evil I would not that I do.

How soon we sink down into carnality and death, and like a rower plying against the stream, at once fall down with the current when we cease to ply our oars. These oars are prayer, reading, meditation and heart examination, and without them too soon we slip away from the harbour to which we hope we are bending our course. And yet we daily find that we cannot use these oars to purpose except the Lord be pleased to put strength into us. We may indeed attempt to use them, and should not cease to do so. But alas, of how little avail are they unless He who teaches the hands to war and the fingers to fight, teach us also their use, and give us power to use them in His strength, not our own.

I am not one bit stronger in myself with all my long profession and, I hope, possession of the life of God; but on the contrary, have a more sensible feeling of my weakness, sinfulness and helplessness than ever I had before. At the same time I hope I have learned more deeply and thoroughly whence all my strength, wisdom, righteousness and sanctification are to come, and thus to look more to the Lord and less to self.

May our lot, living and dying, be with the saints of God whom He has redeemed with the precious blood of His dear Son, whom He has

called and quickened by His grace, and to whom He has made known the blessed mysteries of His kingdom as set up in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. Time and life are fast passing away with us, but we hope that through distinguishing grace we have not lived altogether to sin and self, but have endeavoured, very weakly, indeed, and imperfectly, yet in the main sincerely, to serve God in our day and generation, to seek the good of His people, to be blessed and be made a blessing. To live a life of faith upon the Son of God is indeed a blessing beyond all price, and such a life here will prepare for a life of eternal and unalloyed enjoyment hereafter.

But though we thus seem to get sick of earth, sin and self, yet we feel the need of divine communications of life, light, liberty and love to raise up the heart and draw the affections heavenward. Hunger is not food, weariness not rest, and sickness not cure. How we need the blessed Lord to appear for us and in us, that we may find in Him that rest and peace, that happiness and consolation, which none but He can bestow.

It is an inestimable mercy when in the absence of suspension of mental energy, the soul can quietly and softly repose on the bosom of mercy. And indeed, this is one of the choicest blessings of the covenant of grace, that it gives rest and peace, quietness and stillness in the assurance that the work of Christ is a finished work, that nothing remains to be done, and that all is secured in the Person of the Son of God, in whom the Father is ever well pleased.

Blessed Lord! May our desire and delight be to exalt Thy worthy name; for Thou art our All in all! All divine truth is in Jesus, comes from Him and leads to Him. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

MINISTERS' MEETING

Due to the concerns that the Committee have about the state of the nation and the churches, they have invited the ministers on the Gospel Standard List to a meeting for prayer. This will be held, if the Lord will, at Clifton on Saturday, November 7th, 2009 at 10 o'clock and will be conducted by the Editor.

“THEY SHALL SEE”

(Isa. 26. 11).

By Septimus Sears (1820-1877)

The following extract is culled from a sermon preached in Clifton Chapel, Bedfordshire, on a national fast day. The cattle were dying in their thousands because of the disease then so terribly prevalent and the Asiatic cholera was sweeping across Europe in a menacing way. Hence the call to prayer, in answer to which the Lord showed abundant mercy. (From *The Sower*, 1950, reprinted by request.)

The prophet's prophetic declaration: “They shall see.” God has two “*shall sees*.” He has His “shall see” of mercy, and His “shall see” of wrath. O that England's “shall see” may be a “shall see” of mercy! It will be a “shall see” of mercy if it should be such a “shall see” as opened the eyes of Nineveh to their evils, and led them to repentance – if it should be such a “shall see” as shall so lead them to forsake their evils, as that not only the cattle plague shall be removed from us, but that the threatened falling rod of cholera may be checked in its descent.

History furnishes us with many “shall sees” of mercy. Germany would not see in the dark ages of popery, but it was a “shall see” of mercy for her when God raised up Luther to hold the lamp of truth in the face of the Romish Jezebel, that they might see that they had been entertaining a vile harlot in the place of the chaste spouse of Christ. It was a “shall see” of mercy to Switzerland, when Zwinglius was raised up, a burning and shining light in its cantons. It was Geneva's “shall see” of mercy when God raised up Calvin to hold on high the torch of truth.

And England, in spite of its popish “will not see,” has had its merciful “shall sees” in the days of Wycliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley and Hooper, in the days of Henry and Edward. But it has also had its “shall sees” of judgment. Alas! it would not see that its Reformation ought to be thorough, that when Rome was sent away, all her furniture should have been sent after her. It would retain its ecclesiastical offices and services, souvenirs of the departed harlot; but a “shall see” was sent in judgment in the days of Mary. O then, mirrored in blood, England had to see the true features of the murderous beast of Rome! The blazing piles around her holy martyrs made her see the evils of popery. And, as it is true that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church,” these horrid spectacles were, no doubt, instrumental in raising that popery-hating race, the Puritans, who upon the accession of Elizabeth longed to see the begun Reformation carried forward by the removal of the remains of Romanistic ritualism in the Church of England.

But the misguided Elizabeth and her advisers, with their mistaken *semper idem* (always the same), stereotyped the church as it has come down to us, with all its finger marks and remnants of the Romish apostacy.

I call “always the same” a sinful motto, when it is used of things containing error mixed with truth, the human and the carnal amongst the divine and spiritual. What if “always the same” had been carried out in the Dark Ages! Where would have been the glorious Reformation? Where would have been the Church of England? Why, where the traitors in her camp are trying to place her – buried in the deep idolatry of the Church of the Seven Hills. But, thanks to God that His “shall see” opened the nation’s eyes, as if it were “by terrible things in righteousness,” to see as clearly as they did see in England’s throwing off the yoke of Rome; though it must be confessed, that with regard to the full Scripture reformation, they only saw men “as trees walking.”

What shall be the character of God’s “shall see” in our case? Shall it prove a “shall see” of mercy or of judgment, or shall it be a mingled “shall see” of both?

That was a terrible “shall see” for England when in the very year of the Act of Uniformity, that drove from the Church of England two thousand precious clergymen of whom the nation was not worthy, God sent the Plague that so desolated London that the grass grew in her thoroughfares. Let us, my dear friends, let us earnestly pray that no such “shall see” may be in store for our beloved island home. Let us rather pray that if the nation will force upon the lovers of truth in England’s Church the continuation of Romish rites, that God may give goodly men of God such tenderness of conscience and such faith in Him, that with one voice they may make their parting protest and shake off the dust of their feet against an establishment that can nurse infidelity and popery, and, Abraham like, go forth at God’s call, not knowing whither they go.

I have not dwelt upon the crying evils of secularism, error, fashion and worldliness amongst Dissenters, and immorality amongst the people.

But I must not longer hold your attention to what I have to say. I must invite you to accompany me to the throne of God’s heavenly grace, that there we may offer our praises for national mercies, confess our national offences, and entreat the Lord to make the present, uplifted hand of judgment a sanctified “shall see,” and send such a “shall see” upon our rulers, that error and superstition may be discountenanced by them, and truth and peace prevail amongst us.

If prayer do not constantly endeavour the ruin of sin, sin will ruin prayer.

Owen

CAROLINE SPIRE

By Betsy Jane Riley (later Mrs. Daniel Keevil), 1885

Mrs. Keevil (an honoured member at Coventry and then Birmingham) lived on till 1948. She was the aunt of Mrs. Betsy Jane Stone of Coventry (who was named after her) and of Mrs. Denyer of Canterbury.

Caroline Spire was the author of many beautiful poems which were published in the Gospel Standard. Some years ago, Mr. Malcolm Pickles published a little book of her life and poems.

Caroline Spire (née Matthews) was born at Abingdon, Berkshire, in the year 1820. She appears to have been the only one in her family who gave any evidence of being a chosen vessel of mercy. She was often filled with wonder and astonishment in reviewing the Lord's goodness to her in passing by others and making her the favoured recipient of grace and mercy, and setting her apart as a vessel sanctified and made meet for the Master's use.

At an early age she gave evidence that she was born in sin and shapen in iniquity. When young, the Lord sent an arrow of conviction into her conscience, so that she was deeply wounded and felt very miserable on account of her sins. Many times have I listened with interest while she has told me of how she was led to see herself a lost and ruined sinner, and how the great depths of her fallen nature were opened up to her view, the thunders of the law of God pursuing her night and day, and that passage continually uppermost in her mind: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." She set to work in real earnest to try and keep the holy law of God and to appease the demands of stern justice, but the more she worked and tried, the more she failed, so that she concluded she was a sinner more hardened than others and that her case was a very desperate one. I here give an extract from her own writings in which our dear friend speaks of the exercises of her soul at this solemn stage of her experience:

"My distress was very great, and God's holy law to me was full of terror. I knew none but Christ could deliver me from its dreadful curse, but I did not know Him for myself, and all I heard or read seemed only to sink me lower. I heard of faith in Christ, it is true, but did not know what it was. I thought there must be some secret in religion, but knew no one that could tell me anything about it; and so I went stumbling on. The faith which I possessed at this time was a faith in the Being of a God of inflexible justice and terrible majesty, a holy God hating all manner of sin and by no means clearing the guilty. I as much believed in the Being

of a God of justice and holiness as if I had seen Him on His throne of judgment, but as a God of mercy, a God of love in Christ Jesus, as yet I knew Him not. Therefore no softening, humbling, melting feeling was produced in my soul, but a feeling of terror, dread and slavish fear possessed me continually. At these seasons, the thought of the naked and destitute state of my soul, and having to appear in the presence of a holy and heart-searching God in that state, was ever uppermost. Truly I felt my need of a covering to clothe and adorn my poor, naked soul, but as yet I knew nothing of the imputed righteousness of Christ. I could not see how a guilty sinner like myself could become justified in the sight of God."

Mrs. Spire then goes on to say how she was obliged to lay aside her forms and wordy prayers, and creep into secret places and there cry for mercy, but was very much tried for fear anyone should know of it. Sometimes she was for giving all up, fearing she was beyond the reach of mercy, and at other times "holpen with a little help" and encouraged to follow hard after Him who had made a vacant place in her heart, which none but Himself could fill.

Upon one occasion, when in very trying circumstances, these words were applied to her soul with much power and sweetness: "And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation" (Psa. 107. 7). She considered this the first word of encouragement the Lord gave her. Darkness and gloom fled before it, and in its room a sweet hope was raised up in her soul that the Lord had thoughts of mercy to her, which kindled such an ardent desire in her breast after an acquaintance with Him that from that moment she said she felt sure nothing would ever satisfy her but His own dear Self.

At length the set time arrived, when the Lord sealed pardon in her soul with these words: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31. 3). Speaking of this she says:

"I had such a precious season as I never had before, and I sat up till morning reading that one precious chapter, Jeremiah 31, and holding communion with the Lord. Truly the lines had fallen to me in pleasant places; I had a goodly heritage. 'Thy words were found, and I did eat them,' and they were as honey, yea, sweeter than the honeycomb. I could now see and feel that the words, 'Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love,' belonged to me, for they came with special sweetness and power to my soul. When I read of God bringing the blind and the lame, and leading them with weeping and supplications, I saw how mistaken I had been all the time I was trying to become good, and wise, and strong, by looking to that ugly monster, self, instead of beholding the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

“My heart seemed to melt within me as I read of the Lord’s love to His people, and His promise never to cast them off, and I longed to love Him supremely. I could see the cords of love by which I had been drawn, and the gracious hand of my Lord who had been leading me in a way that I knew not, and in paths I had not known. All my crooked things were now made straight and my rough places plain, and I could rejoice in the Lord, and glorify the Rock of my salvation. I looked for my sins which had given me so much uneasiness, but felt they were all pardoned.

“O how my heart glowed with love to my dear and precious Saviour! His very name was precious, and my heart, which at times seemed hard as the nether millstone, which all the terrors of the law could not soften, now melted with tender love, gratitude and praise. I told Him I was unworthy of His love, and was astonished to think that He should have chosen one so vile. He answered, ‘Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.’ ‘Drawn thee from thy vain pursuits, and the follies of the world; drawn thee from self, which long stood in the way; drawn thee from the law, by the deeds of which thou never couldst be justified; and drawn thee to Myself, in whom all the seed of Israel is justified, and shall glory.’ I wept with tender grief, and as I thought of the depths of His love and mercy, my soul broke forth into singing, and I cried, ‘Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.’

“This was on September 13th, 1840. After this sweet manifestation of His love, my soul would very often go out in desires after Him, and I could not rest satisfied until I had a glimpse of His sweet countenance, for He was in my eyes the Chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. The Holy Spirit discovered much of the beauties of Christ to me. O how I loved the Lord’s people, and esteemed them as the excellent of the earth!”

After having been brought into the liberty of the gospel, our dear friend felt it a privilege to show her attachment to Christ by being baptized in His dear name in sweet obedience to His divine command, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14. 15). She was constrained to cast in her lot with the friends at the Baptist Chapel, Evesham, and was baptized on February 3rd, 1841. Her friends, Eliza Grove and Mrs. Crane,* were members of the same church. Many times I have heard her say what a favoured season it was to her soul the first time she sat down at the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper.

The minister was a Mr. Cole, whom she believed was a good man. Those of the members who loved the discriminating truths of the gospel

* Caroline Spire wrote a long poem about “Eliza Grove, the blind girl,” and also a shorter poem about Mrs. Crane.

walked in close union with each other. One day, as they were met together conversing upon the things of God, the minister called in, and hearing their conversation, he said, "Why, you are as high in doctrine as Mr. W. Gadsby." One replied, "Yes, Sir, we are, and should esteem it a great privilege to hear Mr. Gadsby preach, for we have read his books with pleasure." He then said, in a very solemn manner, "You are right, and I wish all the members of our church believed the same blessed truths."

After a time Mr. Cole left, and another man was placed over them who made salvation to hinge on man's free-will. The sole drift of his ministry was to exalt the creature to the dishonour of the great Creator. This was a great trouble to some and they could not endure it. So, after being visited by the deacons, Mrs. Spire, with nine others, were excluded for their high notions and objecting to the preaching of the new minister. As there was no truth preached within seventeen miles, they met with some who called themselves Brethren, and were soon brought into confusion and darkness of mind. But the Lord did not allow our friend to stop among them. Speaking of this season, she says,

"The Lord was pleased to chasten me for my folly, both outwardly and inwardly, so that my life was quite a burden to me. I had a weak body, a truly wretched mind, an unhappy home, and what was worse than all, I felt much perplexed respecting the most important of all subjects, and with scarcely a ray of hope that I should ever arrive at anything like assurance again."

About the year 1845, she was led in the providence of God to Stow-on-the-Wold, where she attended the ministry of Mr. Roff [Robert Roff, died 1862], of which circumstance she writes as follows:

"O how kind and gracious it was of my Lord to make the trials and His chastening the means of bringing me once more under the sound of the glorious gospel, which was in the hands of the Holy Spirit to be the means of convincing me more deeply of error, driving me from my refuges of lies, instructing me in the way of truth, and finally restoring my soul, and once more leading me in the green pastures, to feed beside the still waters. As the minister knew nothing of how I was entangled in the errors of Brethrenism, I was astonished to find from time to time how he was led into subjects which in the hands of the Holy Spirit were made the means of pulling down, as it were stone by stone, the mighty building which I had been rearing, and burning up the wood, hay and stubble. I felt while hearing him such a conflict in my mind which it is impossible to describe; but although I was cut up root and branch in my feelings, I could not have stayed away on any account. I had yet to be more humbled and brought down.

On January 13th, 1846, I heard Mr. Roff preach from John 4. 14. While he was speaking of the springing-up of the sacred waters of

salvation in the believer's soul, I seemed to feel them springing up afresh in my soul in hope, love and joy in the Holy Ghost. I went home rejoicing in the Lord. That night the Word was so precious that I was too happy to sleep."

(To be concluded)

FOUNDED ON THE ROCK

Part of a letter written by Robert Moxon of Bury, 1903

I can assure you that the longer I live, the more I keep learning my own utter helplessness, my perfect weakness, and what seems worst of all, my wretched, nasty, naughty, abominable, wicked heart. I know more than ever what the poet meant when he said,

"Shocked at the sight I straight cry out,
'Can ever God dwell here?'"

If God were to leave me to perish in the middle of my heart corruptions, I do not know that I could offer a word in my own defence; and this brings me more than ever to plead for mercy. O God, be merciful to me a sinner! And it enhances the riches of God's free, sovereign grace in the gift of His dear Son, and the salvation which *He* wrought out for poor, lost, ruined, condemned sinners. His sufferings and death, His bloodshedding and atonement, His righteousness and obedience imputed, His intercession and advocacy, His promises and faithfulness – all these are the ground of my hope, and when applied by the Holy Ghost (and none but He can apply them), they are the rejoicing of my soul, and the strengthening of my faith.

And blessed be God, there are times when I am favoured with a comfortable persuasion that my sins are washed away in the fountain of Jesus' blood, and that His robe of righteousness covers me. And when tossed about with the waves of uncertainty, and darkness and doubts envelop me, and indwelling corruptions stagger me, even then my anchor is in these things, lost or saved, right or wrong.

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

If you hear of me dying in the dark, you may venture to say this: "His hope during life was built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. He was a poor sinner, and nothing at all, but Jesus Christ was his All in all."

If you preserve this, you will have some memento of the life and faith and hope of one who is less than the least of all saints and the chief of sinners. Eternity is near, and I commend myself and you to God, and

to the Word of His grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

BOOK REVIEW

Living for God's Glory, by J.R. Beeke and others; hardback; 416 pages; price \$24; published by Reformation Trust Publishing, Orlando, Florida, and obtainable from some Christian bookshops.

The sub-title of this useful book is "An Introduction to Calvinism" – another publication to mark the 500th anniversary of John Calvin's birth.

Perhaps suitable more for the minister or the student, we found *Living for God's Glory* profitable reading. It sets out what Calvinism is, explains the doctrines, and then goes on to set out the gracious effects of Calvinism in the experience of God's people, and then practically in the church and in the family. Specially interesting and helpful are the chapters on "The Puritan Marriage" and "The Puritan Family."

As the publishers say, Calvinism is really true, biblical Christianity. "Calvinism affects all church issues, especially worship and spirituality. Calvinism applies to all of life.... It speaks to every area of human life and thought." Calvinism *is* the gospel.

"HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER"

Thy mercies, my God, O how great is the sum!
 How exalted Thy goodness to me!
 Each day brings new mercies; yet still, as they come,
 My heart is unfaithful to Thee.

Like the heath in the desert, all barren and bare,
 So dry and unfruitful I'm found;
 Yea, the fig tree that withered can scarcely compare
 With my heart, that most desolate ground.

But Thy rivers and streams in the wilderness flow,
 And the desert will blossom and bear;
 And no little flowerets that flourish below
 Are too small for Thy provident care.

And wilt Thou not water the soul that relies
 On Thy love and Thy mercy alone,
 That to Thee in its deadness would lift up its eyes,
 And seek to Thy blood to atone?

Thy love and Thy mercy in days that are past
 Encourage me still to draw near.
 And wilt Thou, and canst Thou forsake me at last,
 Or let me depart from Thy fear?

Ah, no! My dear Jesus, Thy love is too great;
 Thou hast proved Thyself mighty to save;
 Thou wilt raise me again from this wilderness state,
 For Thy loved ones Thou never wilt leave.

My soul shall yet praise Thee again and again,
 For Thy marvellous kindness and love;
 Though awhile in the wilderness here I remain,
 I will shout Thy sweet praises above.

Caroline Spire

OBITUARY

Wallace James Christian, member and deacon for many years of the church at Hope Chapel, Stotfold, died fourteen years ago, on June 8th, 1995 aged 82. The following is his own writing:

I was born in 1912 at Hampden Park, near Eastbourne, and when old enough my mother took me to Grove Road Strict Baptist Chapel on Sunday mornings, and my father took me on Sunday evenings to see his parents, which suited my flesh.

When about eleven years old, I started to attend the Sunday School at Grove Road, and one of the teachers spoke of eternity. This caused an exercise in my heart when I realised I had a soul to save, and I envied the chickens in the garden, which had not. However, this impression wore off and when my father died when I was thirteen, we were brought into providential straits. However, the Lord appeared for us and we had two rooms at my uncle's home.

I formed a friendship with a worldly girl, which took me into all manner of worldly amusements, although I mostly went to chapel on Sunday mornings to please my mother. Eventually the friendship finished, and Ecclesiastes 7, verse 4 – “The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth” – brought me out of the cinemas. I still determined to have nothing to do with the people at chapel, whom I thought to be a narrow-minded lot.

Being persuaded to go to chapel one Sunday evening by a boy about my own age, the Lord arrested me. It was the word “eternity” which entered my heart and stuck fast. I came out believing that all the people were going to heaven and I was going to hell. Like the prodigal I began to be in want. I proved that all my efforts were vain, but the Lord helped me to look to Him for mercy and I was encouraged at various times in my seeking, one of the Lord's servants having for his text on one occasion: “Though the vision tarry, wait for it.”

My apprenticeship finished at Eastbourne, and the Lord found a situation for me at Letchworth; but before leaving I formed a friendship with a young lady who attended the chapel, Kathleen Christie, who later became my wife. I attended Clifton and Stotfold chapels, and was particularly encouraged under Mr. Morris, then pastor at Clifton, on various occasions. War was threatening, and one evening in my lodgings I dropped to my knees, bowed down with soul-

trouble and providential trials, unable to say anything, but the Lord dropped into my heart verse 2 of Hymn 352 which greatly encouraged me:

“But they that in the Lord confide
And shelter in His wounded side,
Shall see the danger overpast,
Stand every storm, and live at last.”

Eventually the way was made for us to be married, and we set up home in Wilbury Road, Letchworth. It was not long, however, before trials came and in the middle of July I was called up for the Army. I sought out chapels in various places in England where I was stationed, and in barracks at Portsmouth the Lord dropped the word in my heart, Ezekiel 16, verse 60: “Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.” Also at Portsmouth, where the friends met in a house because the chapel had been bombed, I was encouraged by a read sermon from the text Isaiah 42, verse 3: “A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.”

A daughter was born to us in 1943, and the next year I was on embarkation leave. I was pushing the pram home one Lord’s day afternoon and the Lord reproved me with these words: “Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?”

Eventually, through many dangers, I was brought safely to a camp about ten miles from Nairobi in East Africa. There were about two thousand in the camp but none I could talk to about soul trouble. I sat on my bed one Lord’s day morning, and opening a little book, these words stood out like letters of gold: “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” I ran out of the tent with tears running down my cheeks, and knelt under a bush and wept to the praise of the mercy I had found.

Eventually, I was brought safely home at the end of the year, and was exercised about baptism, my wife having been baptized while I was abroad. One afternoon at “Hope,” Mr. Woodcraft preached from, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” I felt I could not hold back and wrote to the deacons. The church received my little testimony, and I was baptized by Mr. Morris in January 1946.

A little boy was born in September and we continued attending Hope Chapel. In the latter part of 1950, my wife contracted a serious skin complaint, which rapidly spread over her body and she entered hospital, where for six months I visited her every evening, a kind friend looking after the children. She passed away with a sweet hope that it was well with her soul. I came home that evening and went straight upstairs and looked at my two sleeping children, now motherless, sank into a chair, and the words dropped in sweetly:

“A Father’s hand prepares the cup,
And what He wills is best.”

After difficulties in coping with the children, kind friends from the chapel helped me and eventually the Lord provided for me a gracious helpmeet, Mary Cooper, to love and care for the children. She was spared to me for thirty-nine years until she suffered a severe stroke in January 1991, and passed away leaving behind a sweet testimony. “She’s gone in endless bliss to dwell, and I am left below.” May grace be granted to say “till Jesus bids me go.”

Some details from his family

Father was appointed deacon at Hope Chapel in December 1946 and fulfilled this office until he passed away, and for many years he was the correspondent. He is well remembered by those at the chapel for his faithfulness to the truth in his office as deacon, and his quiet and gracious spirit in the fear of the Lord. In the late 1960s he received an invitation to preach in Kent, but after much exercise he declined as he never felt he was called to the ministry.

He often used to give out hymn 214, "Dear Lord, remember me," hymn 263, "Jesus, the glorious Head of grace," and would often start the morning service on Sunday with hymn 27, "Come, Holy Spirit, come." He was a man of much prayer, and as well as praying for numerous individuals, his constant prayers were, "Remember me with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people"; "Make us right and keep us right for a solemn eternity"; and a plea that he might be kept in his right mind. All these prayers the Lord was pleased to answer.

After his second marriage twins were born but one only survived a few hours.

He was employed in the printing trade and worked for a long time for St. Christopher Press and enjoyed supervising the printing of several of the early books published by the Gospel Standard Trust. When the company was bought by Ladbrokes, a betting organisation, he felt he had to leave, although it meant the loss of his pension rights, which resulted in some financial difficulty for him and mother, but the Lord supplied their needs.

In the spring of 1995, he began to have difficulty in swallowing, and for a few weeks prior to him being admitted to hospital in Stevenage, he stayed with his daughter. The last time he went to chapel was in the afternoon of May 21st when Mr. R. Farley preached from John 14. 1-3 and it was felt that he would soon be joining the mansions in the skies. Whilst in hospital he was very calm and conscious of all that was happening, and seemed happier being nearer to his home and chapel friends. He was asked if that promise in Isaiah which had been given to him many years before was still sweet to him and he replied it was. On the last Sunday before he passed away, a friend who visited him in hospital said that his face shone.

Tests proved that he was unable to swallow at all, and it was proposed to put a feeding tube into his stomach. On the morning of the consultation, June 8th 1995, he was helped to wash and shave, and then fell back on the bed and passed quietly away into the presence of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The funeral service on June 15th was conducted by Mr. R. Warboys at Hope Chapel, Stotfold, and he was buried in the Stotfold Cemetery, Mr. R. Buss taking the committal, in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection.

D.J.C.

2010 CHAPEL ENGAGEMENTS

Ministers and chapel correspondents are kindly requested to make sure that their lists of engagements for the *Gospel Standard* for 2010 are sent to Mr. David Cooper *before the end of October*. This is so that data can be collated and cross-checking take place.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
NOVEMBER 2009

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

A CALL TO PRAYER

We do not need to remind our readers of the need for prayer. Wickedness and abominations abound in our land, and the condition of our churches is very sad. Yet we do believe that “wrestling prayer can wonders do.”

Once again the Gospel Standard Committee suggests that the week of Remembrance Day (i.e. following Lord’s day, November 8th) is a suitable time for meetings for prayer concerning “the distress that we are in” – whether special prayer meetings are called, or special prayer is made at the weekly prayer meeting.

We are reminded of how, when godly Nehemiah heard of the desolations of Jerusalem, he was blessed with a real spirit of prayer that the Lord would appear, and that Jerusalem’s walls might be built once again. He saw both God’s greatness and His mercy – that the Lord can do impossible things. But in true repentance, he poured out his heart in humble confession, not just the sin of God’s people, but his own personally. He could not sink low enough in self-abhorrence. We are *part* of this sinful nation.

We wonder sometimes if the spirit of real confession and repentance is missing in our special days of prayer. We beg for things to be different, to be better (for our comfort?), but may we rather seek the honour and glory of God, and confess how unworthy and undeserving we are. Then may we plead the promises and seek mercy, for Jesus’ sake, through His precious blood – our only plea.

Would God we could stir up ourselves to lay hold upon Him, who, being highly provoked with the handling He hath met with, is ready to depart! Alas, we do not importune Him by prayer and supplication to abide amongst us! If we could but weep upon Him, and in the holy pertinacity of faith wrestle with Him and say, “We will not let Thee go,” it may be that then He who is easy to be entreated would yet, notwithstanding our high provocations, condescend to stay and feed among the lilies till that fair and desirable day break and the shadows flee away.

Samuel Rutherford

READY TO DO WHAT THE KING APPOINTS

*Sermon preached by Mr. G.D. Buss at the Meetings of the
Gospel Standard Society at Rochdale Road Chapel, Manchester,
on September 12th, 2009*

Text: “And the king’s servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint” (2 Sam. 15. 15).

The surrounding events of these words of David’s loyal friends are exceedingly sad, and yet they were prophesied through God’s servant, Nathan, that they would come to pass. Remember how this matter began. It began with a child of God backsliding, a child of God wandering, a favoured child of God, the sweet psalmist of Israel, falling into a snare that Satan had laid for him.

It all began with that terrible moment when David should have been fighting the Lord’s battles. Instead, he stayed on the house top idling his time away, and you know the outcome. He saw another man’s wife, coveted her, and by the time the chapter had closed, her husband had been slain, a family broken up, and David, one of God’s servants, a man guilty of adultery, yes, and even of contrived murder.

Could this be a child of God, you might say? Could this be one in the covenant of grace? Could this be one who has an interest in the redeeming blood of the dear Saviour of whom you have been singing in that hymn (1052) just now? Yes, certainly we are well persuaded that David had indeed an interest in the blood of Christ, he was in the covenant of grace. And yet we find here that the most favoured men, left to themselves, while yet on this earth, prove themselves to be but men.

The great mercy for David, though, was two-fold. One was that of which he wrote later on in one of the Psalms: “There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.” O how he must have prized that blessed declaration! How, by God’s grace, in his guilt he must have clung to that precious faithfulness of God to a returning sinner! “There is forgiveness.” And so there is.

A second favour David had, which might not at first seem to you to be a favour, but it was, and it is – chastisement. “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” God did not leave David in this terrible snare. He did not leave him in the grip of the evil one. He did not leave him in that solemn unconsciousness of the sin he had committed. No, He sent His servant Nathan with that short, but sharp text: “Thou art the man.” And in the power of the Holy Ghost it awakened David’s sleeping conscience and brought the heinousness of his crimes before his eyes, and out of the depths of his sorrow he wrote Psalm 51: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” And the Lord

did forgive his sins, but told him that the chastening hand of God would be upon him for the rest of the days of his life. And so it was.

But I said it was a favour that David had, because the troubles that came upon him after this solemn slip were sanctified troubles. Friends, "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards." You are born to it. I am born to it. Whether it be in bodily affliction, family trial, church difficulties, or difficulties in the way in your providential path, you are born to it. But the great point is, only God's people are born to *sanctified* trouble. And David was one of those favoured characters who are born to *sanctified* trouble. You may be in trouble this afternoon, you may be in deep trouble, you may be out of your depth in trouble. But have you asked God to sanctify it? O, you may say, I have asked Him to get me out of it. Friend, that may come in God's time, but the first point is, will He sanctify it? For if you come out of your trouble as you came into it, and gain no benefit from it, then what good will it have done to you? But if you can say as David said in Psalm 119, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes"; and again, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word"; well, dear friends, then your trouble has done you good if it has humbled you, if it has made you prayerful, if it has made you a confessing sinner, one fleeing to the blood. Yes, and also one now walking more carefully, more circumspectly, more watchfully, then your trouble has done you good.

There is no doubt that though severe trouble came upon David following this solemn slip, those troubles were so sanctified that we have the benefit of them in the Psalms which he wrote in these deep trials. And what a comfort they have been to the church of God ever since! Satan overreached himself, as he always does. God knew how to turn the curse into a blessing, and He still knows how to do that.

We read in the Epistle to the Galatians, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." David had sown havoc in another man's family; he reaped havoc in his own family for the rest of his days. Out of his own family rose up one, Absalom, who was ready to dethrone his father if possible, and even murder him, that he might have the throne for himself. But how did David behave under such a solemn, dreadful, personal, close dealing? Well, he said, "Let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him" – that is let the Lord do – "as seemeth good unto Him." That was great grace. Here was a man humbling himself under the mighty hand of God. Here was a man who was not complaining of God's strokes. Here was a man who was not declaring God to be unjust, but rather, if we had David here this afternoon, he would say, "Compared with what my sins deserve, how light are all my pains."

Why did God chasten David so then? There are three great reasons. Firstly, God's name had been blasphemed by David's behaviour, and

therefore it was only right for the honour and glory of God's name that God's justice in some measure should be revealed. Secondly, why was David chastened so severely? Why, to bring forth in his own heart and by God's grace those precious fruits of repentance. And God chastened him sufficiently to bring him to his knees, to force him to the throne of grace, and to make him sick of self and fond of the One whom he had left in his affections, even his God. Thirdly, why was David chastened so? That you and I might have a solemn warning on the face of Scripture that if such a godly man, such an upright man, such a praying man, such a steadfast man as David could slip as far as he did, how much more need is there for you and I to pray as David did elsewhere: "Hold up my going in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe."

These are the background circumstances around our text this afternoon. I want, with God's help, to look at it now in two further ways which may be for our instruction. First of all, to consider the spirit of these loyal, loving servants to David. And then secondly, more importantly, to consider a type here of a precious Christ whose dear people in their right minds, under the influence of the love of Christ, do say this: "Behold, Thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint." And what a mercy it would be if that were the effect of our worship this afternoon, if we went forth from this house of prayer with that spirit, "Behold, Thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint." It is a great thing to say, you know, a tremendous thing to say. And as you will notice in a moment, it needs grace to say it and grace to walk it out.

These dear servants of David do set a wonderful example. They could not be unaware of the history of David's trouble and yet, dear friends, they clave to him, they clung to him still. Why was that? I believe there were three reasons. The first was this: I believe those who were rightly taught among them knew they were sinners themselves. "There but for the grace of God go I," they would say. And whilst they would not have condoned, in any way, David's sin, yet none the less, believing him to be a child of God they clave to him in his trouble and in his trial.

Secondly, they believed this: that though David was indeed under the chastening hand of God, yet his cause in this matter concerning Absalom was a good one. God had placed David on the throne in Israel, God had put him there, and they believed he had a God-given right to be there, and they believed that the cause they were standing by was for the honour and glory of God. And they were willing to be counted as such who believed it to be so. In other words the cause of truth in these difficult days was dear to them however unpopular it may have made

them, however much it may have made them speckled birds. They clung and they claved to the cause of God and of truth as it concerned His servant David.

Thirdly, we may say concerning these servants: they believed the outcome. I believe there was in their hearts some little hope, more than that we may say among those who believed with a deeper faith by God's grace, that God would stand by His servant, although at the moment it seemed so dark, and so depressing, and so distressing. According to all human calculation, everything seemed against David, yet they believed this: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And in that spirit they stood by David and said, "Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint."

What a wonderful gift and grace loyalty is! And, dear friends, it is a great mercy when there is that in the church of God, and among God's dear people, where they may, by the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace, be kept together. Especially it is so in trouble that they cling closer together, cleave more unitedly together, "being bound together in the bundle of life."

"Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint." We now leave God's servant David and David's servants, and we would now think of great David's greater Son, King of kings and Lord of lords, and His servants, His dear people, His followers of whose grace we read in the Book of the Revelation: "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth."

In this context my first point is that as King of kings and Lord of lords, as the great Head of the church, Christ alone has the authority to appoint whatsoever His servants should be doing. Of course He has appointed the ordinances of His house: believers' baptism and the Lord's supper. There are many other commands also which God's dear Son has left for His church. And more than that there is a particular path for each one of His dear people to be walking in, which is an appointed path, it is an ordained path. And when Peter was rather inquisitive about what John should be doing, the Lord Jesus Christ said to him, Peter, "What is that to thee, follow thou Me?" "Follow thou Me." O friends, are you by grace brought to this point:

"Sovereign Ruler of the skies,
Ever gracious, ever wise;
All my times are in Thy hand,
All events at Thy command."

Do you submit to the solemn truth that He has a sovereign right to appoint your path, the afflictions of it, the sorrows of it, the disappointments of it, the discouragements of it, the joys of it, the deliverances of it, the successes that God may sometimes grant you in the

way? Do you acknowledge that He has a right to appoint? Do you believe that? Can you say as one of our hymns does:

“It is the Lord, enthroned in light,
Whose claims are all divine,
Who has an undisputed right
To govern me and mine”?

Yet sometimes we dispute that right, do we not? Sometimes we are ready, as it were, to put forth our hand and say, “Not so, Lord.” Peter did when the great sheet knit at the four corners came down before him. “Rise Peter, kill, and eat.” “Not so, Lord,” he said, but he had to learn, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” O friends, we need much grace in this, “Whatsoever.” Is there something come into your little path that you had not expected, had not looked for, some new trial, some new trouble, some new difficulty? “Whatsoever.” Or is it this: some new command laid upon you, some new chapter opening up – “Whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint.”

You can be sure that whatever King Jesus appoints for His dear people, first of all, is for His honour and glory. When He appointed for Martha and Mary that they should lose Lazarus in death, what did He say? “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” That was the first reason for the sickness, that “God might be glorified thereby,” even to the laying of their brother in the tomb. But the second reason was that they might prove Him to be “a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God.” And finally, the appointment turned for their good.

Sometimes we speak of disappointments, don’t we? But you take the letter “d” away and put in “h” in front, you find *His* appointments. Only one letter changed, but if God changes the letter for you, dear friends, it will be like the bitter waters of Marah made sweet, when that tree was cast in that the Lord showed to Moses. Those waters they could not drink, would not drink, but they were appointed to be drunk, and they found they could drink them and they were glad to drink them. That is sanctification. And that is what you and I need in our disappointments, that they may be viewed as *His* appointments, and learn the lesson of Psalm 46, verse 10: “Be still, and know that I am God.” O for that grace to be still.

“Be still, my heart! these anxious cares
To thee are burdens, thorns, and snares;
They cast dishonour on my Lord,
And contradict His gracious Word.”

“Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.” But what about this word “*ready to do*”? Here is

something which is much deeper than you might think. But let us be very clear, if you know anything about your natural man, your carnal mind, your old nature, it is *not* ready to do whatsoever King Jesus does appoint. It fights against His will, it resents His authority; it will fight tooth and nail against the way.

“The flesh dislikes the way,
But faith approves it well;
This only leads to endless day
All others lead to hell.”

It is one of the great plagues of a true believer that he finds he has got a nature that is *not* “ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint.” Is there anyone here this afternoon and you feel God has laid, as it were, upon you an appointed path and your poor old nature is fighting and kicking and struggling, resenting it? O, you say, how can I go on like this? Well there is a beautiful word we find in 1 John 5. Dear John knew something about it. “This is the victory that overcometh the world” – yes, in our hearts – “even our faith.” That faith which we were hearing of so sweetly this morning. That is the victory that overcomes. How else could Abraham have left Ur of the Chaldees except faith had overcome all the objections? How else could he have taken Isaac up Mount Moriah, the very one in whom in one sense all the promises were stored? However could he do it except that faith, God-given faith, overcame the objections? What great grace that man showed!

But let me just remind you of three characters in the Word of God who had to learn what it was to be made “ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint.” First of all my mind goes to Peter. He actually took the language on his lips: “Lord, I am ready to go with Thee into prison, and to death.” They all said it, but Peter said it most vehemently and he was sure he was speaking sincerely and honestly from the depth of his heart. But he did not realise that he was not ready. He was not ready. He had not been prepared for that yet, for the foundation upon which he was building was not the foundation of the Spirit; it was just his flesh. So, dear friends, what happened when the first blast of temptation came against him? That servant maid and others who said, “This man wast also with Him.” Why, he begins to deny Him with oaths and curses and lies and swearing angrily denying. Can this be the same man who was ready to die? It is the same man. It is the same man, but he is not ready you see. That is the point. Peter had to learn it. For when he came into Satan’s sieve, he found all that natural strength went, all that natural resolution went, all that natural religion went. He found his determination had to rest, not on what he could do, not on what he was ready to do, but on what the Lord would do for him. “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.”

Friends, there was the strength of Peter's perseverance later on. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Without that prayer of our great High Priest above, we are not "ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint," especially when it is fiery trials, and deep waters, and thorns in the flesh, and crooks in the lot. O, it needs grace from above, as we sang:

"Every grace and every favour
Comes to us through Jesus' blood."

So Peter had to learn, did he not, that he was not ready in himself; it had to come from above, and when he was weak in himself, then he was strong. When he became a fool for Christ's sake, then he became wise. When he was despairing of self, then he found his all in Christ. Then he could walk out "whatsoever my Lord the King" appointed for him.

Go a little further back in God's holy Word and we come to His servant Isaiah. The dear man of God was in the temple on that memorable day. God was commissioning him to go and preach and prophesy in His name, but O he had to be made ready. What do we find? That great vision, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory." And poor Isaiah found all his comeliness was consumed. He said, "I am cut off." "Cut off." What he meant was apparently this: that when a man is weaving a carpet, when he has finished weaving it, he cuts off the ends. But Peter and Isaiah did not feel to be like the beautiful carpet woven with wonderful colours. They were the part that had been cut off, left to be swept away and burnt. "Cut off." "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Lord, I am not ready for anything. My mouth is sealed.

"My guilt and sin have stopped my mouth;
I sigh, but dare not talk."

That is how he felt. He felt his mouth was sealed up because of his guilt in the sight of God's holiness. That was until the live coal from off the altar was brought by one of the seraphims: "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Yes, then he heard that voice, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I send me." Ready to go. Yes,

"Stripped of all his fancied meetness
To approach the dread I AM,
He was led to see all fitness
Centring in the worthy Lamb."

He sheltered beneath the coming Messiah, felt the sweetness of what atoning love and blood is. That made him ready, that made him willing,

that made him, as our text says, “ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint.”

There is nothing like the atonement, dear friends, to melt hard hearts in this respect, to bend stubborn wills and move unwilling feet. It is the application of the atonement, the bringing near of the love of God in the blood of Christ, that will do it. That will do it. Then Psalm 110 will be fulfilled: “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power.” Have you ever known a day like that? – when all objections are removed by the gospel, all hindrances are taken away in the love of God as it sweeps into your heart like a precious river of sweet atoning love and mercy, peace wrought by the blood of the cross. Everything is right in that moment. You are willing then, ready then to do whatsoever the Lord your King may appoint. The atonement brings it to pass. The gospel accomplishes what nothing else can do.

“Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.” If there is one here this afternoon who may feel so unready to do what has been appointed for them, and they feel like this: Lord, how can I overcome this solemn, sad reluctance, all these hindrances within? Then beg the Lord to bring you near to the foot of the cross, and to get a glimpse of Him who hung thereon between two thieves, suffering, bleeding and dying. May He bring you where the good hymnwriter came,

“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend,
Life, and health, and peace possessing
From the sinner’s dying Friend.
Here it is I find my heaven,
While upon the Lamb I gaze;
Love I much? I’ve much forgiven;
I’m a miracle of grace.”

Child of God, that will do it. That will do it.

Now we come a little further back in the Old Testament, in the history of it, and consider Jonah. Was Jonah “ready to do whatsoever his Lord the King had appointed”? No, when he was commanded, “Arise, go to Nineveh and preach the preaching that I bid thee,” in his spirit and actions he said, “I am not going there. The men of Nineveh are my arch enemies. I don’t want the gospel to be preached to them. They are not Jews.” In his own judgment everything was against it. In his natural man within he said, “There will be no success there. They will not hear the gospel. They are idolaters. No, there is no point in me going there.” He deliberately set his face against what the Lord his King had appointed.

Then he went quite a way, seemingly successfully in so doing. He goes down to Joppa, and there is the ship to Tarshish, and what does he

find? There is a space for him. He had the fare to pay for the passenger berth. Everything seemed to smile on him. And perhaps his conscience said, After all the Lord is smiling on me in this matter. But friends, deep, deep down he knew He was not! But O what did the Lord do to bring that man to his senses? He prepared a mighty wind that would not subside till the man was cast into the depths, swallowed by a great fish. Then, if you read it very carefully in the Book of Jonah, it seems that for three days and three nights he was there, and still he was not willing to heed God's command. Even the severest dispensations, until God sanctify them, do not make a man willing.

But when God puts His sanctifying hand to it, the deed is done. So we read in Jonah chapter 2, after those three days and three nights: "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly." Then when all hope was gone, then when all help was gone, then when nothing short of a mighty miracle could bring it about, *then* he prayed. And as he prayed unto the Lord his God, a vow was wrought in his heart by the same God, that if God would but bring him out of this terrible trouble, he would go and preach the preaching God bid him. And so he did. We read, "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time" – note that – "Arise, go unto Nineveh, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." God had not changed His appointment. And all Jonah's fighting and arguing and debating and quarrelling with God did not change God's appointment one iota, and nor will your fighting and struggling against God's appointment change it one iota. O dear friend, pray for submission. Pray for humility. Pray to be like clay in the hand of the Potter. So then we read, "So Jonah arose, and went." That short sentence. "Whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint."

My mind also went to two other characters in the Word of God who perhaps were led by more gentle means to the same point. Think of Rebekah. A strange man, Eliezer arrives in the tent door telling her that she would be the wife for this man Isaac whom she had never met. When she hears the exercise of this man Eliezer and the connection with the things of God in the matter, when the question was put to her, "Wilt thou go with this man?" "I will go." "Whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint." Ready to do. Led by lovingkindness. Drawn by love. She turned her back on home, comforts, all she knew, and went out with the same faith with which Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees, and the Lord honoured her in it.

Friend, whenever you are constrained to do what is in our text this afternoon, be sure of this: the Lord will not be in your debt. He will make the way, and He will provide for you in the way. He will indeed. Jehovah-jireh will be with you right the way through. That is how

Abraham went up Mount Moriah. He could not have gone up without that precious truth in his heart, "Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide." Friends, if the Lord appoints the path, He provides in the path, and some of us are blessed witnesses to it.

"Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint." And then we think of dear Lydia. You know in the church of Phillippi there were two very different characters. One had come into the church "by terrible things in righteousness," the other in a more gentle way. Both Lydia and the Philippian jailor were brought to the same point: "ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint."

God is a sovereign in the way He works. With some it is a gentle work over many years, others more suddenly done. But the point is the same; they are brought to submission, as clay in the hands of the Potter, or, as wrought iron. You see as you go about the country, wrought iron gates. The iron is in beautiful patterns. How has it got like that? Well the metallurgist heats up the rod of iron to a great heat and when it is malleable, when it is pliable, then he twists it and turns it skilfully, and bends it exactly the way he will have it. And then when it cools down, of course, it will set in that pattern. So, dear friends, as the Lord puts His dear people in the fiery trials, in the deep waters – that is where you are this afternoon, one of you perhaps. Lord, why is this? "Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?" No, He is not pursuing you to death, dear friend; He is putting you in the fire to bend your will to His. He is. "Whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint." And that thing you said you will never do, why, if God ordains it you certainly will.

"Whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint." Then we go back and we see the most sacred of all examples, the dear Lamb of God. O what can we say as we see that mysterious conflict in His holy Person? There was no sin in that conflict whatsoever; let us be very clear about that. No. But none the less there was a holy conflict in His holy mind over this great cup about to be put into His dear hands by His heavenly Father. But O the example He set! Listen. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And friend, if ever you get a glimpse of what that cup meant to the Saviour and your part in that cup, if ever you see your sins as being part of the grief and the curse that He had to drink that you might be free from your guilt, be justified in His name for ever, a faith's eye glimpse of that, that will bend your stubborn will, that will melt your hard heart, that will bring you "ready to do whatsoever my Lord the King shall appoint."

But there is one further thing that is very precious in that chapter. It is a great mystery, isn't it? We read about the angel appearing from heaven to strengthen Him. How can you explain that? Incarnate God, strengthened by an angel inferior to Him. Well, the angel did not come

to strengthen His Godhead. That he could not do. In fact, there is no need to strengthen His Godhead. But O as the Man Christ Jesus. O friends, there we find just a hint of the depth of His sorrow that He endured, that felt weakness that He might be a sympathising High Priest to His dear people who feel so weak. When God appoints a path for them and they feel unequal for it, He understands, He sympathises.

“In all thy distresses thy Head feels the pain;
Yet all are most needful; not one is in vain.”

Do you need strengthening this afternoon? Do you feel to need that? Is the appointment so heavy, such a burden, does there seem such a cost to it? Lord, how can I drink it? This cup, how can I go on with it? Well, a glimpse of the dear Saviour, that will do it. And He knows you need strengthening. He knows it. You know the beautiful word in Isaiah 40: “To them that have no might” – note that, not a little might – “them that have *no* might He increaseth strength.” Paul had no might when that thorn probed him. It took away all his natural strength, all his natural wisdom, all his felt ability to continue in the way which God had appointed for him. It seemed an insurmountable hindrance, an insurmountable obstacle. He more or less told the Lord he could not go on with this thorn in the flesh. What did the Lord say to him? “My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” “Therefore,” said the Apostle Paul, “will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” “For when I am weak, then am I strong.”

There is the principle of the reception of grace. “When I am weak, then am I strong.” And you will not get the grace you feel to need in any other way. “Out of weakness,” you read in Hebrews 11, “were made strong.” That is how God works. You want a big store, ready to take with your carnal hand as you need it. That is not God’s way. God’s way is this: “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?” He is her strength. As we were reminded this morning, the Lord is my Light and my Strength. What a wonderful word that is! “My Strength.”

Another good man in the Word of God said, “My God shall be my strength.” What more do you need than that? “My God shall be my strength.” It is all summed up in that well-known but not worn-out word: “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.” Friend, what more can He say to those who are in this path?

“And the king’s servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint.” May God make me willing.

“Thus make me willing, glorious Lamb,
To suffer all things for Thy name;
At last be where my Jesus is,
And rise to everlasting bliss.”

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY NORTHERN MEETINGS

*Report of Meetings held at Rochdale Road Chapel, Manchester,
on Saturday, September 12th, 2009*

PRAYER MEETING

After opening the meeting with prayer, Mr. T.J. Rosier (Pastor, Maidstone) read Hebrews chapter 11, verses 8-16, and spoke as follows:

The apostle in recounting something of the lives and of the exercise and witness which is by precious faith of the patriarchs and of some of the Old Testament saints, so sets it forth to encourage us. In the next chapter, the apostle exhorts us to follow that cloud of witnesses, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” Friend, if the Lord is the author of our faith, we, each of us, will feel our need of Him to finish that faith, and to finish the work that He has begun. We need Him to crown that precious faith at our journey’s end with sight, possession and the complete fulfilment of the blessed promise, with all its felicity and eternal happiness and joy. If we have been called then we are on pilgrimage.

Note from Isaiah chapter 51, verse 2, how the Holy Spirit through Isaiah speaks of Abraham: “For I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.” Now Abraham is set forth as a sacred pattern of one who lived by faith. Also observe that the apostle by the Holy Ghost again sets forth how he was justified, and how each true believer is justified by the grace of God as he indeed looks alone to Christ. He is justified on the ground of the blood of the everlasting covenant, and he is justified by the infinite merits of Emmanuel and the love of God, and he is called to believe, and therefore God justifies him. In the exercise of waiting upon God and believing in Him, so the blessed Spirit of truth will feed, strengthen and comfort the pilgrim, and his blessed heavenly King will minister to him that everlasting strength to get safely home to heaven.

Now notice this, Abraham came out. He was called out, as we read, verse 8: “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” O what a mercy to hear that call! It is the sovereignty of God. It is a blessed call and there is no call like it.

You begin to hear the Shepherd's voice. The heart is opened to begin to attend. Do you remember the days when your heart was opened to begin to attend? Some of you may have wandered away from the fold, but the Lord called, "Return." Some of you may never have wandered away, but O the ministry began to speak to your heart with power. God sovereignly blew upon your soul. O remember the Almighty is not confined or limited as we are confined and limited. He has every means at His disposal to call His sheep and it is always (is it not?) according to His eternal purposes.

The following word in Romans chapter 9 was a great comfort to me in the summer: "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth." Of course, the apostle is there referring to Jacob and Esau. We opened our hymn with that blessed truth:

"'Twas with an everlasting love
That God His own elect embraced."

And ah, my friends, Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me," and the promise is, "And him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6. 37).

The church of God in following the pattern of the faith of Abraham have ever been sojourners and pilgrims and poor, needy sinners coming to the mercy seat, coming to the throne of grace. What a mercy to be a pilgrim! If you are, you are a comer, a comer to God and a comer to the celestial city at last by that grace, that grace that called and opened your heart. And as you are taught, you need that grace to conquer.

"Do Thou my sins subdue;
Thy sovereign love make known."

Do you feel your need of this?

"The spirit of my mind renew,
And save me in Thy Son."

And do we not need saving day by day to the very end of the journey? "He is faithful that promised."

Now there is something else. He believed God. We read in Genesis, and the apostle takes up the theme in writing to the Romans and Galatians, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he had to go out from his native city of idolatry and go to a place he had never seen with his natural eye. He only heard of it by a report from God. It was not by natural understanding, for there was not the advantage of our modern communication in those primitive times.

The Lord instructed him in his own soul. He believed, and he went out on that dangerous journey.

Now notice something else: he came completely out. One of the evils of the modern age and a weakness in the professing church of God is that there is not that complete coming out of the world, my friends. Notice that Abraham did not leave a parcel of land or a house or something behind him just in case he had to come back. O his faith was strong and he fled! True he had the call at Ur and then at Haran after his father had died. And so “he went out, not knowing whither he went.” But he trusted in God.

And we read here that “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country.” It was full of Canaanites, full of abominations, and idolatry and gross wickedness, and there he was, vulnerable, in weakness, and defenceless apart from divine defence. And yet the Lord took him out of his tent and showed him the starry realms above and said, “So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord.” Yet he had no tangible evidence.

There is something very blessed about faith. Faith lives under trial and load, and also under convictions and reproofs, and the hidings of God’s face with fatherly correction and chastening. Indeed, in fiery trials, and with many scornors and evil, threatening men surrounding, faith still lives because there is that engraving of the truth in the heart. Faith says, “I must be found in Him. O I must get to heaven. O my sins must be washed away. I must be reconciled to God.” And you see, the church of believers is divinely directed to trust alone to Him. Abraham had to trust for twenty-five years with no evidence. I know he got busy. And we are as guilty when busy flesh puts our own hand to things. Yet it brought Abraham sorrow over Ishmael. Do not our wanderings and our devices, and our own backslidings and contrivings, bring sorrow upon us from time to time? They do!

But the promise stood, and O believer, the promise stands in that heavenly calling, when you first were led out to Him, to look to Christ. Now some of you may have had some sweet times in your early days, the days of the Son of man upon earth, when you knew sweet communion with Him. And now days of darkness have followed, and fiery trial. You wonder where the scene will end. The Lord may be silent for a good long time. And yet, you see, you are called still to believe and still to wait, still to trust, and still to hold fast. We also read of Moses, “For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”

I have seen nothing visionary with my natural eye at all. I do not suppose any of you have either. No, my friends, it is the voice of the Shepherd, the inward call, what you have seen and viewed by faith in the sweet communications to your own heart, to your own soul. And he

waited twenty-five years, and then he had the promised son. He had sorrow in his flesh as another dear son (Ishmael), whom he loved, had to be sent away. This was a grief to him, as we read in Genesis. And then another trial, the promised son was to be sacrificed, but Abraham obeyed, "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (verse 19). The Lord said, "But he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 10. 22).

Well, it is wandering in the world in a solitary way. Where Abraham was in that land of Canaan was only type and shadow of the heavenly. He is no longer in the earthly land. His blood-washed soul and spirit is in the heavenly land. The mortal remains are left behind awaiting the glorious resurrection.

So we journey on. Now look at the present day: I do not need to enlarge. All God-fearing men are grieved. We really wonder what is going to take place. Antichrist clearly reigns in this once most highly favoured land, but the Lord reigns still over His own dear people, even in England today. Yet there is a nation of people which only God knows the number thereof. God does not reckon them among the nations of the earth. They are those that are called and sanctified, chosen in the everlasting covenant. And they are called to go out and to seek Him, and to trust and wait upon their God.

Dear friends, are we not strengthened by the bread of God? In your faintings, temptations and weaknesses, is there not a hunger and thirst in your soul? Are there not those gospel crumbs from time to time? Does not the Lord still visit His people? He does. He does visit His people. His covenant is that He will never leave them nor forsake them because He loves His people. They are His bride, and even before the marriage supper of the Lamb, He delights to give them a few love gifts, some tokens and kisses from His mouth. He whispers in their ears, as it were, to assure them He is with them and will never leave them, and that the first promise and any succeeding promises stand, and they stand for ever. "I will see you again."

Abraham journeyed on through his days and died at 175 years. We journey on and time is very short. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Dear friends, there is a glorious prospect before the church. May we live as pilgrims should live. When they kept the Passover they ate it standing, you see, with their loins girt about, that is gathered up, their staff in their hand ready to depart. May we be helped, my friends, as we live here, no more to live our life after the flesh but to live to Him who has called us. I realise we come short. I realise we blunder along. We look back over our profession. All that we have touched we have failed and sinned in. O but we plead the precious blood that means something to us. May we be helped still to plead, still to trust, and still to wait upon Him.

Now you see, the Lord brought Abraham safely to the earthly Canaan. The Lord will bring every one of His dear people safely to the heavenly Canaan. Do we not have to lean hard? Did not the bride in the Canticles have to lean hard upon her Beloved? Friends, it is amazing that as we journey on, we have to lean harder, do we not? Ralph Erskine says something like this: when the church is first called it is like an army going out to battle, all in beautiful livery and so on, and marching in tune and in step as it were, and very confident of victory. But after the many battles over the years, they are like stragglers, blood-stained and torn in their clothes and limping along with injuries, and a man might say, "We thought you were going out to possess the land." The answer is, "Man, it will be the greatest miracle if I really get there at last." And some of you may feel like that, but friends, He is faithful. O He cannot deny Himself. He knows whom He loves, and if He has loved your soul from everlasting, He will call you. You will know that calling. You will taste His sweet grace. You will know the sweetness of that grace and the sweetness of the promise. You are now being taught and prepared.

And I feel this, as we journey on and get nearer to our end (for our time is short here), we feel a greater need to be prepared. The old ministers of years ago used to say things like this: "If the Lord left me to take the last step by myself, I would not take it." Friends, we need a mighty hand every step of the journey, But it is sweet grace.

I must close now because of time. Well, may we be among those that we read of in verse 13, who were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and yet His witnesses that He is God, and prove the wonders God alone can do to those who live by faith and trust alone to Christ.

Hymns 10, 231 and 1048 were sung during the prayer meeting. The following prayed: Mr. P. Hill (Manchester), Mr. A. Rayner (Luton, Ebenezer), Mr. D.W. Kerley (Swavesey), Mr. D.J. Lawson (Clifton), Mr. D.J. Christian (Luton, Bethel). Mr. Rosier closed with prayer and the benediction.

BUSINESS MEETING

After the singing of hymn 396, Mr. F.A. Ince (Fitzwilliam) asked God's blessing on the meeting.

Mr. G.D. Buss (Chairman of the Gospel Standard Society) read John 6, verses 5 to 14, and then spoke as follows:

There are three points which rest on my spirit as we read these sacred truths out of God's holy Word. The first point is this: what a time of proving it was for God's servant Philip! Here the Lord Jesus Christ asked him concerning this mighty need they had. And where did he look at first? Just as we do left to ourselves, he looked to his carnal reason and natural intellect.

“Long we either slight or doubt Him,
But, when all the means we try
Prove we cannot do without Him,
Then at last to Him we cry.”

Dear friends, we live in proving times. Our needs are immense. The state of the churches, the need that God would raise up godly ministers, that He would raise up pillars in the churches, that He would raise up lambs in Christ’s fold, and in the dark day in which we live, stalwarts for the truth. These are immense needs. It is a time of proving. Where do we look?

The second thing that rests on my spirit is this: the great Provider. Here was an immense need and we read of what is said concerning the Saviour Himself, “He Himself knew what He would do.” That blessed word *Himself*, verily God, verily Man. “He Himself knew what He would do.” Friends, it is a great mercy in our times of proving, when all created streams are dried, to be forced to the sinner’s Friend: forced with all our impossibilities, all our iron bars and brazen gates, forced to this One who is the great Provider, that One of whom Abraham spoke, “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering.”

And then thirdly: the wonderful provision. Who would have thought that out of five loaves and two small fishes this vast company could be fed, and even after that, there would be a surplus for the disciples? Friends, we should never limit the Lord, whether it be in providence or in grace, whether it be in our families or in the church of God or in the nation. O may we not be like those who limited the Holy One of Israel.

Our needs in the Society are great in many ways, and also in our churches. But may we not lose sight of the ability and the willingness of our God to attend to the cry of those who come helpless, ignorant, weak, poor, destitute, but pleading that mighty name and that mighty sacrifice and those mighty promises. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.”

“He Himself knew.” Friends, there are many things which we do not know, there are many things on our spirit at the moment with which we do not know what to do, but “He Himself knew what He would do.” May God give us the faith and the patience and the grace to “wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.”

CHAIRMAN: Now it is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you to this business meeting. We welcome the opportunity to give a report of our Society at this time to the Northern churches.

The Secretary of the Society, Mr. H. Mercer, then read his report.

GOSPEL STANDARD AID AND POOR RELIEF SOCIETY

Mr. Chairman and dear friends,

Each year we have reason to record the Lord's goodness and mercy to us in maintaining the work of the Society during another year, and more particularly His goodness and mercy to us as a group of churches and also as individuals. We again record these continuing favours. Since we last met here we have as a nation passed through very solemn times. There is increasing restlessness in the nation. The powers of evil are becoming more and more apparent, and we live in a day of compromise and what men call tolerance, which is resulting in a breakdown in moral standards in our country. The powers of darkness have blinded men's eyes, and there is generally a great degree of instability on every hand. Feeling the seriousness of these things, it is a great comfort to realise the stability of the truth and to be given a real desire to possess the blessings which the apostle speaks of as "riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Living souls will realise more and more that they are but pilgrims here below, passing through a wilderness, but they acknowledge that they are maintained by a rich and constant supply from the fulness of grace in Jesus Christ.

The Committee is very concerned about the times in which we live and also for the spiritual welfare of our churches and congregations. Sadly, spiritual lightness and some appearance of antinomianism is becoming evident in some places. May the Lord preserve us from any tendency to error and keep us to the truth. The gospel of salvation is, we are thankful to say, still preached and there are evidences here and there of the application of the truths of the gospel to poor sinners' hearts. Of late a few have been enabled to testify of what the Lord has done for their never-dying souls. May there be yet many more so favoured that they have to come to tell of the Lord's goodness to them. In these solemn times the Committee seeks that the Lord would return in power among us.

Feeling a deep concern over the churches, the Committee has, subject to the Lord's will, arranged a prayer meeting to be held at Clifton on Saturday morning, November 7th, at which it is hoped as many as possible of the ministers on the Gospel Standard list will attend. Private and denominational prayer is our only weapon, and we are reminded that "weakest souls can wield it best." May the Lord graciously send answers to our poor prayers for His blessing, both personally and collectively.

The Committee has the responsibility to administer the funds of the Society, and these funds remain in a healthy condition despite the great reduction in the amount of interest received on our investments. The reserves are substantial and financial assistance continues to be given to our friends in need. Several new cases have been brought before the Committee recently and different levels of support are given according to their individual needs. A few new subscribers have joined the Society, and for this we are very thankful. Friends that hold the Gospel Standard position are welcome to become subscribers, and especially we welcome younger friends.

Many of the subscriptions and donations that are made by individuals are subject to the gift aid provisions, and this enables the Society to recover income tax on these amounts without any additional cost being borne by the payer. The Committee is sincerely grateful to those chapels that take collections for the Society. In the six months ended June 30th, the cash payments of £47,207 exceeded the income of £20,528 by £26,679.

Regular quarterly grants are paid to some of our chapels for the support of the ministry and this assists causes to pay a proper amount to ministers. Recently some additional chapels have been helped with a quarterly grant for this purpose. If there is a need, the Committee is always willing to give financial assistance to chapels after making the usual enquiries. The cost of fuel has recently risen sharply, and for many of our ministers the cost of travelling is in excess of 40 pence per mile. This should be reflected in the amount given to a minister for an engagement.

We are grateful to pastors and deacons who arrange collections for the benefit of the Society, the Magazine Fund and especially for the Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund. This Fund is very dependent upon the level of annual support and will be especially so this year with the substantial reduction in income from investments. In the six months to June 30th, the interest received was £912 compared with £2,884 in the previous year. The needs of the friends that are regularly helped through the Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund remain much the same as before, and many of those helped are very appreciative of the assistance given annually in early December. A number of letters are received expressing their feelings. The Committee would ask for particular support for this Fund in the present financial climate. It might be of interest to note that only a fairly small number of chapels take collections and give donations to the Society and Funds and many of these are on a very regular and consistent basis.

At this meeting we usually state the cost of the magazines for the following year, and because of the increased cost of distribution, the *Gospel Standard* will be £18 and the *Friendly Companion* £12.60. One of each magazine will cost £27. In the usual way, there will be reductions in respect of chapel parcels and the student rate. The cost of postage overseas has considerably increased and although this is subsidised, the cost of a *Gospel Standard* sent airmail to America will be \$43 and a *Friendly Companion* \$34. One of each magazine will be \$58. There is a reduced rate for magazines sent surface mail. The cost of a *Gospel Standard* sent to Australia by airmail will be AUS\$48, of a *Friendly Companion* AUS\$38, and one of each magazine AUS\$63. To Europe a *Gospel Standard* will cost 29 euros, a *Friendly Companion* 24 euros, and one of each magazine 38 euros.

The cost of a subscription to *Perception* for 2010 will be £9 for UK subscribers, \$19 for subscribers from America, AUS\$23 for subscribers in Australia and 14 euros for subscribers in Europe. The changes in the cost for overseas subscribers are the result of currency fluctuations as well as increased postage rates.

We are thankful that the Editors of the magazines continue to be helped in their labours, and pray that the material in the magazines might be made spiritually profitable to readers. There are testimonies that the Lord is pleased to use the printed material for the profit of souls and for His glory.

The Committee is grateful to Mr. John Chapman for the high quality of the magazines, and there have been a number of expressions by magazine subscribers of pleasure that this quality has been maintained. We know that he takes great care in printing and dispatching the magazines month by month.

The Committee has decided that, if the Lord will, the Annual Meetings will be held again at Clifton next year on Friday, April 9th. We are very grateful to

Mr. Lawson and to the friends at Clifton for the provision of the excellent facilities for that day. Many of those attending have said that they had a good day at this year's Annual General Meeting and felt that the location was more suitable than Westminster Chapel. There is adequate parking and facilities to meet all the needs of those attending. As usual, the friends here at Manchester have made us very welcome and we are sincerely grateful to them for all that is done to provide for the needs of our meeting today. We seek that the Lord's presence may be felt among the friends here at Manchester as they meet for worship and also in the other causes of truth in the north where the gospel is faithfully proclaimed.

Mr. Rosier expects to travel to preach in Canada and Choteau in October and we wish him, not only safe journeys, but that the Lord's gracious presence might be felt by the friends in the causes where he hopes to minister.

The Committee makes representations to the relevant government ministers and others when matters of importance affecting our religious liberties and moral issues are before Parliament, but although letters are sent to various quarters, there is sadly little positive response, if any at all. However, when these issues arise, letters will continue to be sent.

In conclusion, the Committee values the prayerful support of our friends at home and abroad and, as already mentioned, seeks that the Lord would in much mercy return in power amongst us. These are indeed dark days but may we be helped to join with the psalmist who said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

CHAIRMAN (after thanking the Secretary): I think you will all realise that our friend, Mr. Mercer, actually retires, if the Lord will, as Secretary on September 30th. I would like to record publicly on behalf of the denomination, Mr. Mercer, our gratitude to you for twenty-one years of loyal and loving service. We only see one-tenth of the labours above the surface but I do know that the nine-tenths of labour behind the scenes has been very intense. And we do warmly appreciate your labour of love. May the Lord bless you abundantly in your ministry and in future days.

Our friend, Mr. David Christian, will take over, if the Lord will, on October 1st, and we wish him the same blessing that has attended Mr. Mercer, that he too may have the Lord's help and your prayerful support that has been given to Mr. Mercer over all those many years.

I would just say, as a practical matter, Mr. Christian has had to resign from the Committee because of these changes, and also as Vice-Chairman. So our friend, Mr. John Cottington, was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Society at the July meeting, and we wish him the Lord's richest blessing in that office as he takes it up.

Mr. T.H.W. Scott (Bethesda Secretary) then read his report.

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

Mr. Chairman, subscribers and dear friends,

We desire first to record our thankfulness to the Lord for His continuing mercies to Bethesda. For 65 years Bethesda has provided care to the Lord's aged people from our Gospel Standard chapels, and the original objectives of the charity continue to be met. There have been many changes over the years, and possibly those engaged in the work in the early days would hardly know what to make of the way the Homes are conducted in these days of heavy regulation.

At the present time we have a total of 44 residents in the three Homes, and nine residents in the Flatlets at Harpenden and Redhill. The list of people who have applied for future residence in the Homes stands at 40 names. Many residents are in extreme old age, with 23 residents over the age of 90 at the end of 2008.

Bethesda employs approximately 90 members of staff, both full-time and part-time, and in 2008 for the first time our annual employment costs exceeded £1m. From April 1st, the Bethesda fees were set at £458 per week, rising to £525 per week for residents with higher needs.

Like all charities, our investment income has dropped dramatically with interest rates standing at only a quarter of the rate enjoyed a year ago. We are therefore particularly grateful for the subscriptions, donations and chapel collections which continue to be given and so generously support the Fund. There are at the back of the chapel a few copies of the 2008 Annual Report so if you have not had one, please do feel free to take one. There is included a Subscriber Application Form, and we would again encourage you to complete the form and become a subscriber.

I am able to report the receipt earlier this week of a major legacy from the estate of the late Miss Eunice Aston amounting to £145,000. Miss Aston was Matron at the Redhill Bethesda Home from 1980 to 1983, and in her latter days was a resident in the Brighton Home for eleven years until her death at the end of last year.

Early in the new year work was started at Harpenden to provide a much-needed extension to the dining room. At the same time a medication store was built and fitted out with a purpose-made unit to provide secure storage in separate compartments for residents' drugs. A new room was constructed to house the freezers, and a storage lobby built to accommodate large items of equipment such as the trolley shop. All of this work was successfully completed by early April. The work has been paid for from a legacy left to the Home by the late Mr. Leslie Palmer of West Row.

In April the Care Quality Commission (or CQC as it is generally known) took over as the new regulatory body for the care industry. The CQC will bring together independent regulation of health, mental health and adult social care in England for the first time. There will be a transitional year before the system comes fully into force in April 2010. The new regulator plans to introduce many new standards to elderly care, and these we are studying at the moment. The CQC's chief executive, Cynthia Bower, has said, "We shall put people who use services at the centre of everything we do. We expect providers of services such as hospitals, health trusts and care homes to demonstrate that they actively seek people's views and respond to what they say." For Bethesda, one example of how this would work in practice would mean consultation with the residents on how they would like to see the organisation of common spaces such as the lounge and gardens. The Commission will be looking for a continuous dialogue between

management and residents about all elements which affect the quality of their lives in the Home.

At Harpenden, the service of thanksgiving and open day to mark the 40th anniversary of the opening of the Home took place as arranged on Saturday, June 13th. About 220 visitors attended and the day was felt to be a time of true thanksgiving for the Lord's mercies to the Home over such a long period. Mr. Ramsbottom gave a very appropriate address, speaking from John chapter 13 and the latter part of verse one, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." We felt that a nice spirit prevailed, and we were favoured with a beautiful summer day, with tea being served in a marquee and most people sitting in the gardens. There have been many tokens of appreciation on the arrangements for the day.

We were pleased to announce last year that the Harpenden Home had been upgraded from a two star "good" rating to three stars, placing it in the "excellent" category. Following an inspection of the Brighton Home in August this year the rating of the Home was similarly increased from two stars to three stars. The inspector had no statutory requirements or recommendations. We feel this satisfactory outcome is a commendation of the Home Manager and all the team. It is unlikely the Home will be inspected again for at least two years.

Perhaps this is the point to mention that Bethesda's oldest resident, Mrs. Lois Dinnage, died in the Brighton Home on May 22nd, at the age of 102 years 78 days. You will also be interested to know that our friend, Mr. John Watts, who for 20 years gave the Bethesda Report at these meetings, celebrated his 90th birthday at Harpenden last week. As most of you know, Mr. Watts is now a resident with his wife in the Harpenden Bethesda Flatlets.

All of our Homes are affected by recent amendments to the Mental Capacity Act, as a result of which Care Homes are forbidden to deprive residents of their liberty unless a strict and rigorous procedure is followed. If it is necessary for the safety and well-being of a resident to restrict their liberty, this can only be done after applying for a Standard Authorisation if the matter is not urgent, or an Urgent Authorisation if it is. One of the difficulties for our Home Managers is that there is no statutory definition of "Deprivation of Liberty," and there can be difficulty in differentiating between that and "restraint," to which a different set of criteria apply. Our Home Managers are having to assess those of our residents who may, in their own best interests, need to be deprived of their liberty.

Every time we give a public report on Bethesda, we must necessarily include a section where we say thank you to everyone who helps or supports the work in any way. We often think how difficult it must be for some commercially-run residential homes which do not have the volunteer support that Bethesda has always enjoyed. Some charities seek to quantify in monetary terms the value of volunteers. This we have never sought to do, but there are many people who willingly and lovingly give of their time to help Bethesda, and this we truly appreciate.

We would desire to end this report in the way we began – by thanking the Lord for all His many mercies to Bethesda through another year. May He continue to be our helper.

CHAIRMAN (after thanking the Bethesda Secretary): Just one or two notices which you might like to know about. First of all, the Gospel Standard Library is undertaking a particular project at the moment. It has

a section called the “Rare Books.” These are not allowed out because they are so rare but they are now being scanned by a company, which means they will then be available in digital form for people to look at and to research. We hope that it will be a benefit in that these books would otherwise be beyond people’s reach.

Secondly, it has been a great help that all the volumes of the *Gospel Standard* from 1835 right through to the present have been scanned on to a CD and DVD and are available for any friends who wish to avail themselves of that particular facility. Again, that can be very helpful for those who are researching and also in this digital age to be able to have the truth so readily available, we hope this may have the Lord’s richest blessing.

Gospel Standard Trust Publications has two books that are imminently going to be released. One is called *The Scottish Reformed Ministers* by Mr. John Broome, which is an account of those “able ministers of the New Testament” whom God used in the Reformation in Scotland. Also, very interestingly, there is a book of William Tiptaft’s sermons which have never been published before, and this will be a very instructive book for the denomination.

The Gospel Standard Trust General Fund has ample funds at the moment for any truly needy chapel which may need help with repairs and renovations.

Thanks were expressed to the Manchester friends, with the desire that the Lord will “revive His work in the midst of the years.”

The meeting concluded with the singing of hymn 500, and prayer by the Chairman.

LOVING CHRIST

By Thomas Vincent (1634-1678)

The love of Christians to Christ is a grace wrought in their hearts by the Spirit. It is a flower most sweet and fragrant, but there is no seed of it in the nature of anyone since the Fall. It is planted in the soul by the Spirit of God. Love to Christ is a divine spark that comes down from above; it is a fire that is kindled by the breath of the Lord, whose essence is love.

The ground of this love to Christ is the discovery and believing apprehensions of Christ’s loveliness and love. There must be first a discovery of Christ as a suitable Object for love, and not a bare notion of this, but believing apprehensions of it, that Christ is infinitely lovely, superlatively excellent, and that His love is matchless and transcendent towards the children of men; that there is a treasury in Him, and a

storehouse of all graces, and the most needful and rich supplies. Otherwise there will be no going forth of the heart in love unto Him.

The acting of Christians' love to Christ is in their desires after union unto, and communion with Christ. It is the nature of love to desire union to the object beloved; especially of this love to Christ, and this union being attained, the desires are after communion with Christ, conversation and fellowship with Him. No conversation is as desirable as with the persons whom we most dearly love.

And this communion being attained, there is chief complacency therein; the soul sweetly rests and reposes itself in Christ, and rejoices in His presence and love.... Lovers do give themselves unto those whom they love; this accompanies the marriage union, and such as love Christ, they are espoused and joined unto Him, and they give themselves unto Him, to be His, and wholly for His use.

CAROLINE SPIRE

By Betsy Jane Riley, 1885

(Concluded from page 316)

The Lord did not see fit to indulge her with this privilege long. [She had been greatly blessed.] After she had been at Stow about three months, she had to return to Evesham, and was far away from the outward means of grace which she had just learned to prize. Yet though there was no preached gospel at E., the Lord was pleased to grace her humble cottage with His lovely presence, and made Himself exceedingly precious by giving many tokens of His love, so that she felt it to be the house of God and the gate of heaven to her soul. The year 1847 was one of special favour to her. She says:

"I had many sweet and precious visits from the Beloved of my soul, and His holy Word was applied with power to my heart, causing me to rejoice with joy unspeakable; so that at times I was abundantly satisfied with His goodness, and felt I could say, 'My God and my Saviour' with an unwavering tongue. O how precious did His love appear to such a rebel! I enjoyed a sweet season from Song of Solomon 2. 11, 12. I cannot describe the precious love of Christ manifested to a poor, guilty sinner like me. It was so sweet, great, grand and glorious that I felt at times it was quite as much as I could bear while in the body, and I longed to depart and be with Christ."

At another time, when her mind was beclouded and dark, the enemy took advantage to harass and perplex her, which led her to cry mightily to the Lord. She writes:

“One evening, having been part of the way home with my dear friend A.F., as I was returning I felt such a spirit of prayer come upon me that I was constrained to stop in the road under a pear tree and entreat the Lord to manifest Himself unto my soul again. I felt a sweet nearness of access to Him, and felt assured He would grant me the desire of my heart. The Lord soon afterwards broke into my soul with such a flood of love and mercy that I was altogether astonished. I know not how to describe it. This was the most solemn, soul-humbling season I ever had in my life, and was very different to the excited feelings of a heated imagination which has a tendency to puff up and exalt the creature. I wanted to lie in the dust of self-abasement, and felt no disposition to talk of my experience, but longed to be alone that I might without restraint pour out my soul to the dear Lord, and tell Him how unworthy I was of all His boundless mercy.

All that night I felt what it was to be in the secret chambers of the King. He had drawn me, and I could not help running after Him. Truly I remembered His love more than wine. It was such a season of solemn enjoyment as I hope never to forget. The Lord had turned my captivity and set me in a large place. All this time I was out of the reach of the preached gospel, but the Word of God was at times exceedingly precious, and I felt I was in the very place where the Lord would have me to be.”

All through this sweet season of manifested mercy, the outward path that our beloved friend was called to travel in was one of an exceedingly painful nature. From nineteen years of age until the year 1861, she and her father lived together, and many were her privations and sufferings occasioned by her father’s intemperance. Often after getting intoxicated, his behaviour would be very violent so that many times she had to escape for her life. Sometimes when in this sad state he would burst open her room door in the night, and threaten to throw her out of the window. I will give another extract from her writings to show the nature of her trial and the firm hold this evil spirit had upon her father:

“One night, hearing him unusually violent, I got up and went downstairs, and found him flourishing a large carving knife, and engaged in an imaginary conflict with the devil, and threatening to kill him with his knife. I was not at all afraid he would kill Satan, but I feared he might do some injury to himself or someone else. I went quietly to him and said, ‘Come, father, you must give me that knife,’ at the same time taking hold of it. He seemed taken by surprise, and gave it up. These continual scenes of violence shook my nerves very much, and I was often ill; but ill or well, there I was, and obliged to endure it.”

Referring to this time of trial she further writes:

“All my times are in the hands of that God who has done so much for me, and not a single trial, affliction or loss of any description shall I

have unless He sees it needful. And with regard to this mortal life, the time is fixed when I must leave this earth and bid farewell to all things here below, and not one moment can I go beyond the appointed time. But even supposing it were His will for trouble, affliction and sorrow to act as His messengers to call me home, what matter if so my Father hath appointed? When I am joining in the hallelujahs of heaven, it will be a thing of little consequence whether my journey here below was rough or smooth, whether I came to an early grave through trouble or whether I was called home in a good old age and full of years. If I am but found in Christ, if my dear Lord will but stand by me and keep me from evil, I will leave the rest with Him, at least while He enables me to do so."

Deprived of the public ordinances of God's house, and being exceedingly anxious to become united with the people of God in church fellowship, she wrote to Mr. Roff and told him of her exercises respecting it. He encouraged her to come forward, and in 1851 she, with two of her dear friends, gave an account of the Lord's dealings with them, and were accepted by the church at Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire. Her father continued in the same sad state until his mental faculties completely gave way, and the last few years of his life he was like a little child. He died in 1861. Many times has she told me that during those twenty years of extreme trial, she enjoyed more of the peace of God in her own soul and more communion with Him than at any time since, so that she could rejoice in tribulation. It was during this season of trial that her choicest pieces were written, some of which have appeared in the *Gospel Standard*.

In 1862 she became united in marriage to the late Mr. William Spire, minister of the gospel, Laverton, who was a kind, loving and affectionate husband. It was in a very remarkable manner the Lord made the way plain in providence for His purposes in this respect to be accomplished. No one, after hearing her account and the exercises of her mind respecting it, with the results that flowed from it, could for one moment doubt but that the thing was from the Lord. Previous to and after their marriage, Mr. Spire used to preach in his own house, and many can bear testimony to the sweet meetings they have had there, and how the Lord has honoured them with His sacred presence while His dear servant has been proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ, the Lord confirming the Word with signs following. Mr. S. died on December 21st, 1872. (See *Gospel Standard*, February 1873.)

After the death of her dear husband, the Gospel Standard Aid Society kindly contributed to her necessities, which she acknowledged as a very kind interposition of providence. Upon one occasion I was with her when she received her quarterly payment. She seemed overwhelmed with the Lord's goodness in thus supplying her needs, and

handing it to me said, "See, here is another token of the Lord's goodness. He will not let me want." She was provided for in a wonderful way up to the last, and like the disciples of old, she lacked nothing. Whenever she had special requirements, the Lord always sent her special help, though often it came from the most unlooked-for quarters; but let it come from what channel or what part of the globe it might, she was ever ready to acknowledge the Lord who had sent it. She often said that not one good thing had failed of all the Lord had promised.

In the year 1875, in the providence of God she was removed to Lutterworth, and here the Lord was with her. If her little cottage in which she lived could speak, it could tell of some interesting things which have transpired within its walls, both of communion with her Lord, His Word and His saints. She was no idle gossip, but she delighted to talk of her Lord and Master and to make known His doings.

On one occasion I felt her little Zoar (as we sometimes called her little cottage) to be a Bethel to me. We were engaged in reading our morning portion. The part of the Word of God selected was John 1. While conversing upon the glorious Person spoken of in the 36th verse, such light seemed to beam forth from the sacred page, and the presence of the Lord so filled the place, that we felt a peculiar sweetness in rehearsing what the Lord had taught us of the Person of Jesus as the sweet Lamb of God. We were each melted to tears, and for several hours could do nothing but talk of the goodness of the Lord to such vile worms. After a time our beloved friend got her knitting, but her mind was so engaged that she could not attend to it properly, so she said, "It is very kind of the Lord to pay us a visit, and we must keep holy day."

She now knows what it is to keep holy day without any interruption. We feel her loss keenly, for truly she was a mother in Israel, one who could feel for and sympathise with the Lord's dear people in their trials and afflictions. She was a woman of no ordinary mind, and had a keen discernment in the Word of God, as those who best knew her can testify.

She had not been well for years, but was no worse than usual until Lord's day afternoon, April 20th [1884], when she suddenly fell from her chair with a sigh, expired instantly, and was called home to see the King in His beauty and to behold the land which to us seems so far off. We could not help but remark how very appropriate were the words of the poet:

"One gentle sigh, her fetters broke;
We scarce can say, 'They're gone!'
Before the willing spirit takes
Her mansion near the throne."

"Absent from the body, present with the Lord."

Many of her friends have seemed anxious that something should be recorded of her in the pages of the *Gospel Standard*, and I could see no better way than giving a few extracts from her own writings, and what I knew of her from personal acquaintance. Truly I proved her to be a friend in storm as well as sunshine, and one that constantly frequented the throne of grace for the welfare of Zion.

BOOK REVIEWS

Some Account of the Choice Experience of Mrs. Anne Brine; paperback; 56 pages; price £3.25 including postage; published by The Huntingtonian Press, and obtainable from 72a Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, Hants., SO30 4EB.

With pleasure we welcome the publication of this account of the experience of Anne Brine. Over the years this has been esteemed by God's people, but for a long time has been out of print and unobtainable. Huntingtonian Press are to be thanked for republishing it.

Anne Brine was the wife of the Particular Baptist preacher and writer, John Brine (1703-1765), the friend and associate of Dr. John Gill. Both were Northamptonshire men. It is remarkable how many of the well-known eighteenth century preachers either preached in Northamptonshire, or came from Northamptonshire. Mr. J.O. Pack of Irthlingborough (Northants.) used to remark on this.

We have always been very interested in Mrs. Brine's father, John Moore (1662-1726), pastor at College Lane Chapel, Northampton. He was formerly a member of that remarkable "the church of Christ in Rossendale," whose branches stretched through Lancashire and Yorkshire. Dr. Gill describes him as "an eminent preacher of the Gospel, a minister of the Baptist denomination, of considerable abilities and learning, whom I had the honour to have a personal knowledge of, and acquaintance with." As well as his daughter Anne, Anne Dutton was also a member of the Northampton church.

At the end is a sermon preached by Dr. Gill on August 11th, 1745, occasioned by the death of Mrs. Brine. The text was Romans 8. 33, 34, which had been special to her: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? 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." This is a typical, weighty John Gill sermon (Gill's sermons are easy to read) and ends with a few remarks about Mrs. Brine's godly character.

The Noble Martyrs of Kent, by G. Anderson Miller; paperback; 72 pages; price £3.50 plus 25p postage; published by Dr. Matthew Hyde, and available from him at 5 Hawthorn, Appledore, Ashford, Kent, TN26 2AH.

In former days in England, the story of the glorious Reformation and the noble witness of the Protestant martyrs was generally known. Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* was to be found in many homes, and school children were taught about

Latimer and Ridley being burned at the stake for their faith. As recently as just before the last War, we were taught Latimer's words at school: "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man! We shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."

Sadly, these things are little known today, even among the younger generation in our congregations. So this "sadly interesting book" (as it is described) is very timely.

Written by a Baptist minister in Rochester, and originally appearing in 1924, *The Noble Martyrs of Kent* has passed through a number of editions. This present revised edition is edited by Dr. Matthew Hyde of Tenterden.

The book is well-written and interesting and takes us on a tour of Kent, from place to place connected with the martyrs – Rochester – then Strood – then Dartford – and so on. Altogether there were sixty-four Kent martyrs, and an account is given of them and their martyrdom. There were not only bishops and clergy but poor people – butchers, brickmakers, widows.

What amazes us is the wonderful knowledge of the truth that some of these illiterate people had, so that they were able to confound their accusers. The chief point usually was that they could not accept the sacrifice of the Mass. In our indifferent age, it is wonderful to think how they would not submit over the smallest detail where they felt the honour and glory of God was concerned.

The book is well illustrated, especially with pictures of the various martyrs' memorials that appear here and there in Kent. The profits of the first edition of *The Noble Martyrs* were used to erect the memorial in the cathedral city of Rochester. In most cases details are given (profitably so) of the wording on the memorials.

The cruelty of the Roman Catholic church was appalling during the reign of Queen Mary (1553-1558). It is said today that the chief danger is Islam, but it must always be remembered that Islam preaches its errors in the name of Islam, but Roman Catholicism preaches its errors in the name of Christ. "Let us pledge ourselves never to forget the price paid for our precious Protestant privileges, and resolve to help all to remember our incalculable debt to those who suffered in the past for truth and liberty." So the book ends.

We were very interested that the original foreword in 1924 was written by Tydeman Chilvers. In it he says:

"There must be no parleying with Rome; she is the enemy of Protestantism. Rome is making a great effort to regain ascendancy in this country, and by Jesuitical means and methods she is not without success. Transubstantiation and the Mass are unscriptural and wicked; they rob the Saviour of His glory, and when taught pervert the meaning of Calvary's sacrifice."

We hope *The Noble Martyrs of Kent* has good sales. Any profit will be given to the Protestant Martyrs Memorial Trust.

Come Down, Lord! by Roger Ellsworth; paperback; 57 pages; price £4; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a very sober appraisal of the sad state of the churches, the need for revival, the unconcern of many and the false methods of others. Only the Lord Himself can bring the blessing, but there is the need for true sorrow and repentance.

The book is based on Isaiah chapter 63, verse 15, to chapter 64, verse 12. We are pleased to find the Authorised Version of Scripture is used (though God being addressed in places as “you” grates on us).

The author outlines the churches’ spiritual decay and the absence of the sense of God’s holy presence.

“We have heard for years that if we do not repent of our sins, God will send judgment upon us. We may think we are getting by with sin because things do not appear to be so bad. What most of us do not realise is God’s judgment has already set in. Our apathy about spiritual things is God’s judgment upon us.”

In one place he says: “We need to realise that God can do more in a minute with His power than we can in a lifetime with our ‘strategies’!”

A number of books are held over, waiting for review.

MY DESIRES

I want to be like Jesus,
Pure, loving, lowly, meek;
To follow in His footsteps,
The Father’s will to seek;
To trust Him as my Saviour,
To love Him as my Friend,
Obey Him as my Master,
And on His grace depend.

I want to go to Jesus
In daily, constant prayer,
To tell Him every sorrow,
And on Him cast my care;
To find in Him a Refuge
In every earthly grief,
In trial or temptation,
A comfort and relief.

I want a word from Jesus
To tell me He is mine,
A word of peace and comfort
From His own lips divine.
Assure me now, dear Jesus,
That Thou my God wilt be,
And take me safe to glory,
And let me reign with Thee.

I want a smile from Jesus
To smooth life’s rugged way,
To turn to light the darkness,
To change the night to day;

A smile to cheer all sadness,
 Assuring He is near,
 Imparting joy and gladness,
 Dispelling gloomy fear.

I want to know that Jesus
 My Advocate will be,
 When sinners for a refuge
 To rocks and mountains flee;
 When at the final trumpet,
 The great, decisive day,
 The earth and heaven shall vanish,
 And nature's works decay.

I want to live with Jesus
 Above the clear, blue sky,
 To sing His worthy praises
 In that bright home on high;
 To see Him in His glory,
 Behold Him face to face,
 And love Him to perfection
 In that celestial place.

O Jesus, now before Thee,
 My wishes I'd present,
 My chief desires implore Thee,
 And therewith live content.
 E'en though through darkest sorrow
 My pathway here may be,
 I'd follow in Thy footsteps,
 And reign at last with Thee.

May Shayler, December 1905

OBITUARY

Roy J. Bentley, member of the church at Romford, and for many years a preacher among our churches, died on August 30th, 2009, aged 86.

There is a twofold hedge that God makes about His people. There is the hedge of protection, to keep evil from them, and the hedge of affliction, to keep them from evil.

John Bunyan

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
DECEMBER 2009

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

A COMFORTING WORD FOR MOURNING SOULS

*A previously unpublished sermon preached by F.L. Gosden
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on May 9th, 1976*

Text: “Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. 8. 10).

This chapter gives a beautiful example and pattern of what it is to worship God in the beauty of holiness and in spirit and in truth. The people had gathered themselves together after their return from the Babylonish captivity, and in the preceding chapter we have a register of those that returned from captivity. They gathered themselves together as one man, and there was a unity in that gathering because it was a gathering of the Holy Spirit. In this feast (or what is now a service) the Holy Ghost was there. Broken-hearted sinners were there. These were repenting sinners under conviction of sin as the book of the law was read to them from the morning until midday; they were gathered together under exercise of soul.

It is a wonderful thing to take notice how we come to a service; to take notice of the attitude of our soul: whether we are just in a state of indifference or whether we are hungering and thirsting for the living God. “I seek, and hope to find a portion for my soul” like that of Jeremiah. He so sought this portion that he could leave everything else. “The Lord is my portion” (Lam. 3. 24) – my soul says so. Therefore I can leave every other hope, and my hope is in Him.

This is a very important point in our religion and in our experience, for God will be first and if we are under divine teaching, He will be the Object of our first desire, and that will mean that we will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We do well if we consider from time to time whether that is really so with us, because there is an end in view, the end for which Jehovah sovereignly created: first His own glory and secondly the glory of Christ in the church. If we are in the covenant of grace and objects of His love and subjects of the work of grace in our heart, then our end and object will be the same thing – the Lord Jesus.

Now these people had ears to hear, and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. It is a mercy to have an attentive

congregation, because they are a people that have come for something, a people that cannot live without Christ, a people that have no substitute for Him. This is a wonderful congregation in this chapter.

“And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God” (Neh. 8. 5, 6). So they had Him in reverence, and He is to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him. O what a blessed example was this feast, this service of what true worship is! What a blessed congregation! So he commenced: “Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God”; there was the Object and no other Object. Here was the one thing needful. Nothing else is needful because everything is in Him; the fulness of grace, the fulness of salvation and also the fulness of creation is in Him. O to have some right conception by the Spirit of this eternal, infinite God that we may be brought from time to time to an amazement of faith as was Solomon at the dedication of the temple: “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have built!” (2 Chron. 6. 18). O to be thus impressed by the Spirit of the majesty, glory and holiness of Jehovah as we meet together!

It is a wonderful congregation that we read of in this chapter: “And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground” (Neh. 8. 6). O that it might be so, that we might be thus renewed in the spirit of our minds and that the Holy Ghost might return to us individually and awaken us out of slothfulness and that He may put a new violence in our prayers and in our faith, to stir us up to take hold of Him. They bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. And so he came down to the text – they were a weeping, mourning people so Nehemiah said, “This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law” (Neh. 8. 9).

And in the next chapter you will see a good deal of what was read – the rebellion, ingratitude of the people and the goodness of the Lord in His longsufferings: it entered their conscience, it broke their hearts. And he said to all the people, “This day is holy unto the Lord your God, mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.”

And so he comes down to our text, and he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” This is a comforting word to mourning souls; it would not be wise to use this language to all

and sundry, as the Lord only comforts those that mourn. He only strengthens the weak and He only gives beauty to those that have been burnt to ashes. Opposites meet in the gospel, as we often say, and if it were not that opposites meet, we should be in complete despair. I believe that that truth has kept me from time to time from sinking. Yes, life comes to death, unsearchable riches come to bankrupts, infinite wisdom comes to fools, and grace is made greater in the heart than sin. Opposites meet. Are you thankful, my dear friends? It will help you sometimes to pray when you feel too bad, too wicked to pray. When you feel that your sins are not only innumerable, but that the nature of them is such that you feel unable to confess them; you could never do it, never get to the depths of them. But the Lord can.

And it will help you to read that good word at the end of the 130th Psalm: "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption" (Psa. 130. 7). Plenty of it! O that is a word that will suit a great sinner whose guilt rises high; that redemption is not silver and gold, but the price of His own precious blood which is infinite in its virtue and contains in it the unsearchable riches of Christ, sufficient riches abundantly to pardon – not just make two ends meet – but abundantly pardon, and will give His people at last an abundant entrance to the everlasting kingdom; enough also to purchase an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that can never fade away.

He said unto them, "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet." We just refer to the 25th of Isaiah: "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined" (Isa. 25. 6). And it is just this: it is the gospel, all the gospel contains; it contains the fulness of the Lord Jesus that it pleased the Father should be there, and it pleased the Holy Ghost that all the fulness should be in Him. And it pleases a poor, empty sinner that that fulness should be there. It is a fulness of the gospel with all these riches in it that His people here are exhorted to eat. That fulness of the gospel is a completeness of everything that the church will need to take them to heaven and make them fit to be there. It contains all that accompanies and constitutes salvation; it contains everything that pertains to life and godliness, all the fulness is in Christ Jesus.

There is another fulness mentioned in the Colossians: "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2. 9). And these two fulnesses will be made something to a poor sinner who has been made to know by experience that his wreckage and ruin and pollution in the Fall is so complete that nothing can be added to it. Because that fulness of the Godhead bodily in Christ Jesus is not the same fulness that it pleased the Father should dwell in Him. He, possessing the fulness of

the Godhead bodily – O the blessed word “bodily” – in Him all divine perfections meet, and though He became Man He did not cease to be God. What a Person for a poor sinner to look at as He condescended to come!

This is what they eat: “Eat the fat, and drink the sweet.” He brought this provision of the gospel with Him, in whom all divine perfections meet, and His Deity gives divine authority to everything that He became, everything that He accomplished in salvation. Every word that He spoke gave divine authority (even in His sufferings), for He was “made perfect through sufferings.” Through sufferings perfect – He could not be made perfect in His Person; He could not be made perfect in His humanity, His humanity was perfect, sinless and impeccable. And this means something to a vile sinner. O this is the fat, this is the drink and this is the sweet. By these things alone we can live as the Holy Spirit takes of them and brings them into our heart.

“Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet,” and that is to partake of Christ and nothing less, nothing different. It is a great thing to partake of Him. That really was in the chapter that we read (John 15). The secret of that chapter is the secret of all vital godliness – union with the Lord Jesus Christ, a union that was made in the covenant of grace, a union which is indissoluble and also eternal, a union that nothing can break.

“Eat the fat, and drink the sweet” – and to do this we must partake of Christ. To hear about Him is not enough, to talk about Him is not enough; we must absolutely partake of Him by faith, and that is only by being a living branch in the living Vine. And therefore it is of paramount importance to know that we have union, vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and that union was made possible only by His matchless condescension in taking human nature. It is one of the most amazing things in salvation that He took human nature that His people might be made the partakers of the divine nature. Nothing less will do. This union, firm and strong, a union that was made in the covenant of grace, a union which in experience begins when one is born again and there is a living upon Him, partaking of Him, a union so real that all that He is and all that He has and all of His finished work is ours. This is the gospel.

“Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet.” Has the Lord ever made this place a sanctuary to you, a house of bread to the hungry? Are you hungry, thirsty for the living God? Has He ever made this place a house of rest? Have you ever come to Him with your perplexities and He has been made an interpreter to your case? But O the savour of His name!

“Eat the fat, and drink the sweet.” So that where there is the life of God in the soul, there is the taste: “If so be ye have tasted that the Lord

is gracious" (1 Pet. 2. 3). There is an ear of faith which ear alone can hear His divine voice. When He rends the heavens, opens the heavens and pours you out a blessing individually and personally – you will be brought really to long for this. There will be a longing with a consuming desire for the Lord Jesus and all that He is: that you might be taken up in Him and by Him. When He thus condescends to come, you will be unconscious of anybody else in the congregation and you will be brought to such an intense desire and need together that you will need all that He is. You will tell Him so. I believe I have had to tell Him so and you will feel that there is a completeness in Him which is greater than the completeness of your ruin. How then you will partake of Christ, of His precious, sin-atonement blood! Yes, there are two completenesses, and we shall know one, and if we know one by the teaching of the Spirit, we shall know the other. Complete in our wreckage, pollution and ruin, good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men. But the completeness of His people in Christ is infinitely greater than that completeness of ruin, and it was swallowed up. Christ will swallow up everything that His people are in themselves by everything that is in Him in His fulness. This is the fat, this is the drink and this is the sweet.

"And he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet." But he was dismissing them here, the feast was done. And if you are thus favoured at any time with such communion with the Lord and have communications from heaven to your soul, and find that your little earthen vessel is refilled with the oil of grace; and you get some fresh strength communicated to your soul, some fresh direction for your journey on the pathway through life, then it will leave a savour upon your spirit. And so he says "Go your way." There will be a coming in and a going out to receive pasture. You will come in, and if the Lord is with you and replenishes you with the oil of grace, strengthens your heart and establishes you in His ways, gives you once more to feel that He is precious, gives you to realise that you, yourself and your times are in His hands, and you will feel His divine favour in your soul. There will be a savour resting upon your spirit: you will go out with it, that is the point here.

"Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet"; you will chew the cud. Have you not found sometimes after you have felt the presence and unction of the Holy One under the preaching of the gospel that it has had a sobering, sanctifying influence upon your spirit and made you go softly in the tender fear of God, and perhaps upon your bed the night after, things may come back to you?

"And send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared." That is to say (among other things) that you will not look at your own things, but at things of others also. It takes in a variety of circumstances, as for

instance the Lord's afflicted people that cannot get to the services. It is good to realise that that spirit is among us: there are those who have received something in the service and have made notes and have taken it to those that could not get there. Our hearts will be enlarged if the Lord blesses us, and, "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates." (Prov. 8. 34). That is watching at the gate of the Word of God and watching at the gate of the throne of grace; waiting at the posts of My doors. The services come as did these people gathered together, and when they received something they went and scattered the seed. O my friends, the communion of saints is very sacred, as we read in the first Epistle of John: "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1. 7). It will produce the fellowship of the saints if we have union with the Lord Jesus.

"For this day is holy unto the Lord: neither be ye sorry." He said that because they were mourning, broken-hearted sinners. But then for their consolation he shows them the fountain of all consolation, strong consolation: "For the joy of the Lord is your strength." Now this is the joy of the Lord. There are many carnal joys of a natural man, but this is a spiritual joy and it is among the graces that the Lord gives to His people. I believe it is true what we were singing just now:

"Joy is a fruit that will not grow
In nature's barren soil;
All we can boast, till Christ we know,
Is vanity and toil."

Have you proved it? Do you believe it from your own experience? In my little way I believe that I do. There is nothing else.

"No help in self I find,
And yet have sought it well;
The native treasure of my mind
Is sin, and death, and hell."

There is nothing else, and we shall learn this. I believe there are two directions of faith in the main while we walk through this wilderness: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

"For the joy of the Lord is your strength." Well, this joy of the Lord is the joy of the Holy Ghost, and in the first place I would say that it is a mutual joy. Perhaps you noticed it in the reading: "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15. 11). And that is very blessed; it is faith reciprocating the joy of the Lord in the heart. Now you take these two joys as we have it in the Word of God. Take for instance the opening verse of the twelfth chapter to the Hebrews. There the Lord Jesus had a joy set before Him: "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured

the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12. 2). Now He had a joy; it was set before Him and that joy was His church. He had that joy even when He was upon the cross: "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days" (Isa. 53. 10). It seems almost beyond comprehension, but that is a very significant word: "He shall see His seed" – when He bowed His sacred head, He knew for whom He suffered, He knew for whom He died, and He saw them. It tells us this: that the infinite mind and foreknowledge of God was such that He recognised every one of His people that were given to Him. He saw them, He loved them; He loved them in the covenant of grace. It was the joy that was set before Him when He died; it was the joy of divine, everlasting love. And He bowed His sacred head. Did He see you, did He see me? My friends, we limit the Holy One if we say that it is impossible that He should see the number that cannot be numbered and recognise them. How much less are you going to reduce it? Do you think that the infinite mind of God saw just a nebulous mass, unrecognised? "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2. 19). O what a comfort that is!

Well, that was the joy that was set before Him. In the chapter that we read: "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you." There is another expression of the Lord's joy: "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa. 53. 11). Does He see the travail of His soul in you? It is the accomplishment of redemption in the sinner. He rests in His love. The whole of the work of redemption terminates in the salvation of one of His people. It rests there; it goes no further. With respect to every individual of His people, the whole of the gospel, the whole of the strings of salvation terminate in their salvation. He sees that, He sees that His grace has saved them, that His redemption has redeemed them, that His precious blood has cleansed, healed and pardoned them. This was His joy, His satisfaction.

Now, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you." It does remain because whatever He does is done forever. We said just now that all the divine perfections are in Christ, and therefore everything that He does in His people partakes of His immutability, His divine sovereignty. So it is an everlasting joy: "My joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full."

What is the joy of His people? Why, it is the Lord Himself. I often think of a verse, and I have desired that our dear young people might commit it to memory:

"Knowledge of all terrestrial things
Ne'er to my soul true pleasure brings;

No peace, but in the Son of God;
No joy, but through His pardoning blood.”

We shall learn this: this is the joy, and there is strength in it – O there is a strength in it because you cannot joy in the Lord unless you partake of Him. And so it is the joy of Him in all the offices that He condescended to occupy and execute for His people. And when He dwells in your heart by faith, that joy will be there; He will dwell there as the hope of glory because He will dwell in your heart as your Redeemer, as your Mediator between God and your soul; He will dwell in you as your Counsellor; He will dwell in you in the wonders of His grace. O the joy of the presence of the Lord – that is the thing: His presence.

“For the joy of the Lord is your strength.” And there is another joy too, and that is the joy of the covenant of grace:

“Rejoice, ye saints, in every state,
Divine decrees remain unmoved;
No turns of providence abate
God’s care for those He once has loved.

“Firmer than heaven His covenant stands,
Though earth should shake and skies depart.
You’re safe in your Redeemer’s hands,
Who bears your names upon His heart.”

Do you think there is any joy in the covenant? It is ordered in everything and that is intimately connected with that gracious statement in the Romans, the covenant is ordered in all things and sure: therefore because of that all things must work together for good to them that love God.

Well, this is strength: “For the joy of the Lord is your strength,” and you will weep when this joy is removed. You take the case of David in the 51st Psalm – that beautiful Psalm – he had lost the joy of salvation, he had not lost salvation, but he had lost the joy of it through sin; and he could not bear it: “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation” (Psa. 51. 12).

And so the joy of the covenant is this, that the Lord Jesus has laid Himself voluntarily in the covenant to bring every one of His people safely through this wilderness to heaven, so that everything that concerns them is under the conduct of the covenant of grace. Their worst conditions, their greatest losses, their most severe conflicts, their pains, their sins are all under the covenant of grace. O the joy of that covenant! It was a joy to David when he came to die: “Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant” (2 Sam. 23. 5). And everything He thus gives to His people has eternity in it and derives its eternity and immutability from His Person. O the

strengthening of the soul by this joy of the Lord! I have desired that you may know it more and more.

“For the joy of the Lord is your strength.” There is another joy of the Lord, and that is communion with Him. Whoever felt that joy in the gospel so as to be able to sing,

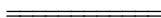
“The gospel bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God,
Lays the foundation of my hope,
In oaths, and promises, and blood”?

As these things are brought into your heart, they will strengthen you like nothing else will; and it is a mercy to have a life that needs to be strengthened and maintained.

“Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord,” and it will be. In reading this chapter – you read it when you get home, and see the beauty of it – I do feel that we are warranted to take this as a pattern for the true spiritual worship of God. Blessed congregation that are in such a case, “for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Well then there will be the end. To His servants (not only those that preach, but every one of His people are His servants) it shall be said, “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. 23). You take the conclusion of the 35th chapter of Isaiah and that will give us this joy: “The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa. 35. 10).

What do you think of this gospel, my dear friends? And O to meet among a people that are thus gathered together. May the Lord give us to seek larger communion with Him and to know more of the joy of salvation here and to enter at last into that everlasting joy. O what a consolation to be given an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of God, because you have known here the earnest and have been abundantly satisfied with the fatness of His house, even of His holy temple. Amen.



The Gospel Standard Committee would like to remind friends that newly-married couples can receive free copies of the *Gospel Standard* and *Friendly Companion* magazines for the year following their marriage. Please contact the Secretary for information. The address is on the inside front cover.

THE ANGELS' SONG

From John Calvin on Luke 2. 9-14

To conclude, consider what is said by the angelic host: "Glory to God in high heaven, and peace on earth to men." "Peace" may perhaps be taken along with what follows, "good will toward men," but the sense is much the same, and need not detain us long. As for the substance of the verse, the angels first urge the shepherds – and through them, us – to celebrate God's goodness and to praise and thank Him as He deserves. This is also the goal of our salvation, as Paul says, notably in the first chapter of Ephesians, but in other places too. God sent His only Son into the world that He might be glorified. Glory, then, to God in the highest!

There are two things to be grasped here. The first is that we must attribute our salvation to God's sheer goodness. If there was something we could contribute, or if mortal men could help, part of the glory would be ours or theirs. But since the angels say, "Glory to God in the highest," all else must be laid low, and God acknowledged as the sole Author of every blessing. God's glory puts the haughtiness of all men to flight; there is nothing of our own we can add. Jesus Christ has been given to us for one reason only, namely that God so loved the world that He did not spare His only Son, but delivered Him up to death for us. Why tie ourselves in knots trying to understand why Christ was given? It was all because of God's love, all because of His free grace. The glory, then, is His. We must not try to steal it from Him and give a bit of the spoils to one and a bit to another, an abomination practised by the papists both now and in the past.

The second thing to understand is the need for thankfulness. When God makes us glad and shows us His favour, we cannot remain passive. Joy should move and provoke us to give Him glory, for He has drawn us out of the pit of death and has brought us to the kingdom of life in order that, as Peter says, we should praise Him forever. The prophet Isaiah in his preaching declares that God has taken to Himself a people who will glorify Him. We, then, are like the plants and fruits of His heritage which He has the right to demand, as when someone plants vines or ploughs fields and receives the harvest. Now we know that, strictly speaking, God can receive nothing from us; nevertheless He wants us to glorify Him, unable though we are to bring Him any gift. The gospel bears fruit every time we are moved by zeal to offer to God the sacrifice of praise. He deserves no less, since in His infinite mercy He has rescued us from the darkness of death.

The angels sing, "Peace on earth." Why "peace"? Because, as they go on to add, God has shown His good will to men. This repeats what

was said earlier. Peace is a wicked illusion unless it flows from the reconciliation and accord that God has made with us. For instead of treating us as we deserve – as enemies – instead of judging us for our disobedience and iniquity which provoke His wrath, God proves to be a Father and Saviour to us, and longs even to rejoice in us so that we might rejoice in Him. Since all that is ours, we may indeed know real peace and rest. Our happiness is firmly founded on God's good will. In His fatherly love He has mercy on us instead of blotting us out of His creation.

The theme of God's peace has been grossly perverted by the Pope and those who follow him. They may sing their *Gloria in excelsis* as much as they like; they have so evilly distorted the verse that they are merely demons in human form. They argue that peace is intended for men of good will, and on that they build the case for merit, asserting that God's grace is useless unless we accept it of our own volition. So when they have sung the *Gloria*, howling the words like a pack of wolves, they then proceed to rob God of His glory by setting up men's good will in opposition.

What the angels meant, however, is clear to us. They meant us to give the glory to God alone, as is His due. When we open our mouth it should be to thank Him for having made peace with us, all because of the good will He bore us. If He was mindful of our miseries, it was to help us in our plight, not to punish or reject us for being abhorrent to Him. He showed us His favour by sharing with us the unfathomable riches of His mercy. He was pleased to accept us when we were full of uncleanness, and when we were fit only for death and condemnation because of the sin He loathes. It is because God stooped low to bestow His grace on us, it is because He has shown us His good will, that we have cause to rejoice.

This should also serve to buttress our faith, for it gives us the assurance that we can confidently call upon God and boldly fight against whatever attacks may come. We know that we always have access to God when it is Christ who shows us the way, and when God's unmerited goodness has made us acceptable to Him.

From *Songs of the Nativity*, recently published by The Banner of Truth Trust.

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

Thomas Brooks

ANNA

From a sermon by Martin Luther, translated from German

Anna did not only give thanks unto God, but she also spoke of Him to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. Luke has a special reason for adding that Anna spoke of Christ only to those who were looking for the redemption. There were certainly not many of them, and none at all among the highly-educated priests. What could these great, holy and cultured people learn of such an old, foolish woman? They considered themselves the real leaders of the people. Thus the words of Anna were undoubtedly despised by these great gentlemen. For the Word of God concerning Christ must necessarily be contemptible, foolish, heretical, sacrilegious and presumptuous to the ears of these great, learned and spiritual men. Therefore, it is only received by the hungering, longing souls that look for the redemption, as Luke says here, who feel their sin and desire grace, light and consolation, who know nothing of any wisdom and righteousness of their own.

Now faith and the knowledge of Christ cannot be silent. They break forth and testify, so that others may be helped and receive the light, as we read in Psalm 116. 10, "I believe, for I will speak." Faith is too kind and bountiful to keep all such treasures to itself. But when it speaks, it is persecuted by all the unbelieving; yet it does not care and goes right ahead. And who knows how Anna was treated? But perhaps they spared her on account of her age and sex, and simply despised her as a silly fool. Otherwise, her life would hardly have been preserved, because she proclaimed such error and heresy, declaring of Christ such marvellous things in opposition to all the doctrines and systems of the learned priests and teachers of the law, who are filled with wisdom and righteousness to such a degree that they do not need any redemption, but deserve only a crown and reward for their good works and great merits. For if we speak of the redemption of Christ, we declare that they are bound in sin and blindness. This, however, is too much for these great saints, to be called blind sinners! Therefore, they cannot endure hearing anything of Christ and His redemption, and consequently they condemn it as a dangerous error and a diabolical heresy.

We now easily understand how it was that the spiritual Anna gives thanks to God and speaks of Christ to all that are looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. For the dear saints of the Old Testament knew Christ well. Therefore, by their whole life they praise God and give thanks to Him, exemplifying the Bible and proclaiming only this redemption, how Christ came solely for those who need Him and hunger after Him. This is proved by all the narratives of the Old Testament. For

God never assisted those who consider themselves strong and not forsaken. On the other hand, He never forsook those who were needy and desired His help. This might here be corroborated by all the stories of the Bible, but it is sufficiently clear and manifest to all who will read them.

The evangelist, in writing of these things, mentions especially Jerusalem, for the reason that Jerusalem means a vision of peace and signifies the hearts that are peaceable, not quarrelsome. Paul writes in Romans 2. 8, that the people who are factious will not obey the truth. Divine truth demands tranquil hearts that listen attentively and are desirous to learn. But those who brawl and bluster, who are pigheaded and demand signs and reasons before accepting the truth, will never find it. They are in the turmoil of Babylon and do not know the peace of Jerusalem. Therefore, they neither look for the redemption, nor listen to the words of Anna.

IN A MANGER

By Thomas Adams (c.1583-c.1656)

It is evident in Luke's Gospel that the shepherds found the Christ-Child lying in a cradle. He who sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high was lodged in a stable. He that measures the waters in His fist and heaven with a span was now crowned in a manger, and swaddled with a few rags. Here they find neither guard to defend Him, nor tumults of people thronging to see Him, neither crown on His head, nor sceptre in His hand, but a young Child in a cradle. They saw a Child who, having so little external glory, they might have saved their pain and seen many in their own country far beyond Him.

Our instruction in this is that God does often strangely and strongly exercise the faith of His people, that their persuasion may not be guided by their sight, but by His Word. The eye of true faith is so quick sighted that it can see through all the mists and fogs of difficulties. Hereon these shepherds did confidently believe that this poor Child, lying in so base a manner, is the great King of heaven and earth. Thus faith that is grounded in the promises of God must believe that in prison there is liberty, in trouble peace, in affliction comfort, in death life, in the cross a crown, and in a manger the Lord Jesus.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

From a sermon by John Kershaw, 1841

“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).

“Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince.” To my mind, that is a beautiful passage in which we have the Lord Jesus blessedly set forth in the ninth chapter of Isaiah, and the sixth verse: “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.” Look at this, beloved; He is here called “the Prince of Peace”; and it is our mercy as poor sinners to have such a Prince as the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the prophecy of Isaiah we also read of the covenant of peace: “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed.” Now what is this covenant of peace? It is that of which David speaks as “ordered in all things and sure.” And why is it here called the covenant of peace? Because it has Christ, the Prince of Peace, for its covenant Head.

Again, my friends, this covenant of peace not only speaks of Christ as its covenant Head, but it has also the blood of this blessed Prince of Peace as its sealing. “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”; so that Christ stands in covenant blood, and thereby this is a ratified, sealed and confirmed covenant. And our comfort is everlasting because it is founded upon the everlasting covenant: “Who hath given us everlasting consolation,” and a good hope through the grace of Jesus Christ, who is exalted as the Prince of this covenant.

No sooner had this Prince, according to the promise, made His appearance here on earth, born of a woman and under the law, and even while He lies in the stable as the poor Babe of Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, than angels are dispatched from heaven to give Him a welcome becoming such a mighty Prince. The shepherds hear the song of the incarnation of the Prince of Peace, and it is this: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men”; “For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

Again, beloved, in referring to the Lord Jesus as thus exalted, whom God has exalted as a Prince, I must direct your attention to His character

as the Prince of Peace, the Mediator between God and man. What does the Apostle Paul say of His character in that precious chapter of the second Epistle to the church at Ephesus? There he speaks of Him as having made peace by His blood. There is a blessed clause in Christ's sermon on the mount, and fitting no-one so well as Himself; it is this: "Blessed are the peacemakers." Christ has made peace between a holy, just and righteous God and a fiery law, and poor, guilty, sinful, vile, rebellious man. "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man"; and that Mediator is Christ Jesus, the Prince of Peace. And how has He made peace? O my friends, He has made peace by shedding His own most precious blood; by dying the Just for the unjust; by putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; by being made a curse that we might enjoy the blessing. So that Christ Jesus, in His glorious Person, is the Prince of Peace through His atoning blood.

And He is our great Peacemaker; and Him has God exalted, and lifted up as an ensign to the nations, that every guilty, burdened and distressed soul might flee to Him for rest. Peace, my friends, is made for us, and is not made by ourselves; for Christ, the Prince of Peace, is our peace, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile by blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, and by removing every obstacle in our way to Jehovah the Father. In Him (that is, in Christ) mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed and embraced each other; in Him, and His glorious death, and blood shedding on Mount Calvary. And, O my friends, where shall a poor, distressed soul look for peace and joy and rest but in this blessed Jesus, exalted at the Father's right hand as the Prince of Peace?

A great many people are for doing the work of this Prince of Peace themselves. I recollect a minister visiting a poor woman who knew something of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he asked her, "Have you made your peace with God?" She smiled, looked up at him, and said, "What! have I made peace with God? O no!" "Then," said he, "it is time you did." "Ah! but," said the poor woman, "my peace with God was made eighteen hundred years before I was born." He asked her how it was that her peace was made so long back. Why, my friends, she had to turn preacher, and directed his attention to Christ, the great Prince of Peace, who had made peace for her by the shedding of His blood, whom God has exalted as "a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins."

Now you shall hear the voice of the Prince of Peace; for He is not only so in His glorious Person, and has made peace, but He is also a Preacher of peace, and He has left His people His peace as a legacy. In addressing His disconsolate disciples in the fourteenth chapter of John, He says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also

in Me.” He says in the twenty-seventh verse, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” When the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ is possessed by the soul of a poor sinner, O then there is a joy that is past all understanding. How blessed is the condition of the poor sinner when in the sweet enjoyment of this precious peace!

O then, let us see this very night how matters stand before the Lord. Are we at peace, or are we harassed under the oppression of sin, and sighing by reason of our evil hearts and the feeling of our numerous infirmities? Are we tormented by doubts and fears, perplexed with temptation, and know not what to do or whither to fly? O! let but the Prince of Peace speak to your troubled breast and say, “I have made peace for you, and am the peace of your eternal spirit” – O then your peace shall be eternal, for it speaks by the blood of Christ to your souls, and when that is possessed, there is rest and joy which the world can neither give nor take away.

We have already seen that the peace of the Christian in Christ is gained by the shedding of the Saviour’s blood. Now you will recollect that the night God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, they killed the paschal lamb, and ate it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. This was typical of Christ. Not a drop of the blood was to fall on the ground or be lost, but it was to be put into basins and sprinkled on the lintel and the door posts of the houses of Israel. And on that very night, when the children of Israel were in their habitations with their shoes on their feet, their loins girded and their staves in their hands, eating the paschal lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs – O! awful and solemn is the thought! – the angel of destruction is dispatched from heaven with the sword of divine vengeance in His hand, passes through the whole territory of Egypt, enters every habitation not sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, and all the first-born of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh to that of the meanest peasant in the land, are cut off. But, O! see; there is peace and rest for the Israel of God. They have the certain assurance of safety and security; as their lintel and door-posts are sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, the destroying angel cannot enter their habitations.

I must pause on this point; it is one of great moment to man, to be thus sprinkled with the blood of Christ, the Prince of Peace. For then we have no cause to fear the flaming sword of divine justice. Having faith in Him, we sit down as under the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land. He is our Refuge from the storm, and our Covert from the tempest. There is no rest for a poor, guilty sinner but in Jesus Christ’s atoning blood; but having our hope in Him, we are as sure of heaven as if we were there already, for there is no condemnation to that soul that is in the Prince of Peace. No charge can be brought against God’s elect, for Christ their Prince has died for them.

There is another circumstance to which I will refer, that of Rahab the harlot. She having hid the spies, the children of Israel made a covenant with her that her house should not be destroyed with the rest of the inhabitants of that devoted city [i.e. devoted to destruction], and the house was to be known by a scarlet line in the window, which should ensure her safety; so that this woman and her kindred who were with her in the house had peace while all the rest were in fear and consternation. When the children of Israel entered Jericho, the people fled in consternation. And why was this? Because the terror of the Lord God of Israel had fallen on them; as the woman said to the spies, their hearts were like water, because they had heard of the great things God had done for them by bringing them out of Egypt, dividing the waters of the Red Sea, giving famous cities into their hands; they trembled. But the woman trembled not, and all that were with her had peace and rest.

And so, my friends, will it be on the great judgment day, when Christ comes riding on the clouds of heaven, and the trumpet of the resurrection begins to sound. The enemies of God will then feel dread and consternation, and will say to the rocks and mountains, "Fall on us," but Jesus will be the Prince of Peace and glory of His people. All the church of God will claim Him as their Elder Brother, and will stand with firmness and boldness and will lift up their heads in triumph, and cry, "I see Him come! It is our Friend and Mediator, Saviour and Redeemer." And Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace to His church and people, shall claim them as His own, while those who would not have Him to reign over them shall be driven back into the shades of everlasting sorrow.

Hearken to the voice of this Prince, my friends, once more. He says, addressing His disconsolate people that are near and dear to Him: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"; He says, "In Me ye shall have peace." Now, flesh and blood do not like tribulation; you and I, planning to get on in the world, never form crooked plans, but smooth plans, and straight plans. But the Prince says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," and, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," but, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord," and He leads the blind through paths they have not known, and makes darkness light before them, and crooked things straight, and says He will never leave them or forsake them.

But the misery of it is that sometimes we are for doing the work of this Prince of Peace ourselves; we are for making the crooked things straight, and the rough places plain. But let us not attempt to do the work of the Prince, but leave Him to do it, and let us only watch His hand. However thorny our paths may be, let us trust our affairs entirely to His guidance, for He is an able and a just Prince, and all power in heaven and earth is in His hands, and the crooked will soon be made straight, and the rough places plain.

The church of God in this world, my dear friends, is like a vessel on a boisterous sea, and the members of His church have to buffet with storms and tempests as they pass along, and sometimes they “reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man”; but when we get a sight of the Lord, then there is a little peace and rest but not else. “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee,” for He is our Pilot, and will steer the vessel safely into the haven of eternal peace.

It is indeed a mercy to be under the protecting care of this Prince of Peace, and through faith in Him, the billows of life shall drop harmless at our feet, when ready to overwhelm us. Perhaps some of you may know something about the sea. In the eighth chapter of Luke, twenty-third verse, we find Christ had gone to sleep; He slept as a man, but as a God He slept not. “But as they sailed He fell asleep: and there came a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. Then He arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; and they ceased, and there was a calm.” You see here, my friends, the disciples woke their Prince with terror and dismay. He arose with a countenance calm and serene, and with majesty and power on His brow. He goes on the deck, takes a survey; the wind roars, the storm increases and seems to threaten destruction every moment. The Prince speaks, “Be still!” The elements obey, the face of the waters is changed, and there is a calm.

O my friends, have we not often felt such a storm raging in our own bosoms? I do not know how you Londoners are, but with me there is often sad kicking within. We shall never have peace till we come to our Prince; and when we look to Him with the eye of faith, we shall hear His heavenly voice saying, “Be still” – and all will be calm.

I have heard a circumstance related, but the truth of it I know not. It has afforded consolation to my mind, and I will give you the relation, since it illustrates the point we are now dwelling on. There was a ship out at sea which was overtaken by a storm. The vessel was in great peril, and the passengers at their wits’ end, expecting every moment to be buried in the waves. Death, grief and destruction were in their countenances. One of them, with much surprise, observed a boy playing, and seeming quite indifferent and unconcerned. He said to the boy, “Why, how is this that you are so calm in such a storm, and the danger we are in of going to the bottom?” “O!” says the boy, with a smile, “I am not afraid, for my father is at the helm, and I look to him.” O my friends, in every storm let us look to our Father in heaven. Every Christian is a vessel of mercy; Christ is the Pilot, He is at the helm, and will steer the vessel in safety through every storm, till we arrive at the haven of happiness as our eternal resting place.

A MONUMENT OF MERCY

A wonderful display of the love and mercy of God manifest to Fanny Hickman of Lower Dicker, Hellingly, Sussex, who died on August 31st, 1886, aged 22 years. She was sister to William Hickman, in later years pastor at The Dicker

She had been afflicted for eight years with consumption, and kept her bed for four years, and could only speak in a whisper. She was a poor, tried, tempted, tossed soul, fearing she had no part or lot in the matter. Her conflicts have not been few nor small, but amidst all the afflictions and sorrow, she found Him a God near at hand and not afar off.

August 28th, 1886: Now I must come to the last few days on earth, when to the astonishment and delight of her parents, they heard her singing aloud of the lovingkindness and tender mercies of her God to her soul. They sent for several to come and see her and to hear her sing. When Mr. Clark [Uriah Clark?] and several friends arrived she said, "Crown Him Lord of all. If you want to know, He told me I was His child and that He had redeemed my soul, and that He loved me with an everlasting love. I asked Him to give me strength to crown Him Lord of all. Crown Him, crown Him, crown Him Lord of all" – when to the surprise of all, she sprang up in bed and waved her hands and handkerchief and clapped her hands with excessive joy. She then lay back exhausted. She desired me to tell the friends she could speak out loud when the Lord enabled her. She again revived and said, "Christ Jesus the Lord, Halleluiah." To Mr. Clark she said, "I could not sing this morning when you were here but I can now."

On Sunday, August 29th, she desired to see Mr. Vine [her pastor at The Dicker] to tell him, "I just can crown Him Lord of all, but not enough. Crown Him, crown Him! Tell him she could crown Him now." She said to a friend, "I want them all in the chapel to sing, 'Crown Him Lord of all.' They sang it in the school room on Sunday during the day. 'My Beloved is mine and I am His.'"

Monday, August 30th, a friend visited her when she said, "I can crown Him still," and then lay back for a time with her eyes closed. She then opened her eyes and fixed them upwards for some time and then said, "If such the sweetness of the streams, what must the fountain be?" She gave such a sweet smile and looked round and said,

"Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found."

"As they draw near their journey's end,
How precious is their heavenly Friend!
And when in death they bow their head,
He's precious on a dying bed."

After a little while, she fixed her eyes upward and said, "O Thou lovely Jesus, do come and take Thy ransomed child home; 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.'" She seemed quite exhausted and then said, "Give me strength to sing once more, Lord." She then sang, "Crown Him Lord of all."

August 31st, a friend visited her, and she said, "Do you think it will be long now?" A friend said, "You want patience to wait." She said, "Yes." She was asked if she wanted to get better. She said she had no desire to get better, but to die and go home. Her strength seemed quite gone. Her parents and friends present were expecting to see her breathe her last, when all at once she heard a man calling, "Shrimps." She said, "No, we have something better here." When anyone came in, she told them to "crown Him Lord of all." She lay for several days, but did not say much till a few minutes before she died. She desired to get in Mrs. Arnold's lap where her happy spirit took its flight to mansions in the skies. Our loss her eternal gain.

From a manuscript, never printed before, "written by Mr. Clark."

BOOK REVIEWS

Commentary on The Psalms, by John Calvin, abridged by David C. Searle; hardback; 660 pages, price £18; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Yet another work by Calvin to commemorate the 500th anniversary of his birth – but we must confess we really liked it, and in many ways were pleasantly surprised.

This is an abridgement of Calvin's massive, five-volume commentary on the Psalms, and is about a quarter of the original size. The author, in a very humble introduction, gives his reasons for this. He really loves Calvin on the Psalms, and thinks his commentary is exceedingly profitable. He feels this treasure is being hidden from many because of its size. He desires to make it known to those who would not otherwise read it. He ends: "My constant prayer has been that something of the unsurpassed excellence of Calvin's instruction will have been preserved and made available to a wider public than would ever make use of the original massive and magisterial work."

The full commentary was originally published in 1557 and first translated into English in 1571.

Calvin is really led into the spirit of the psalmist. He writes, as ever, most reverently and graciously, and yet exceedingly simply. Christ is very prominent in his exposition (for instance, the beautiful 45th Psalm).

We are not certain how far Dr. Searle keeps to Calvin's own words or uses his own, especially when summarising a longish passage. We are sure that he does convey exactly what Calvin says. We found the book very helpful in reading and meditating on particular Psalms.

We realise that Calvin translates Scripture directly from the Hebrew. Dr. Searle does not entirely follow him here (he is himself a linguist and translator) and we do not like the way God is addressed as “you.” Apart from this blemish, we felt this to be one of the best Calvin publications of 2009.

Am I a Christian? by James Fraser; small paperback in the “Pocket Puritans” series; 81 pages; price £3.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a little gem – by which we mean that though small, its value is great.

James Fraser (1639-1698), usually known as “Fraser of Brea,” was a well-known Covenanter preacher. In the recently published *Scottish Puritans*, volume 2, there is a long, interesting account of his life, written by himself. This reaches almost 300 pages. (We reviewed *Scottish Puritans* in April.) He was one of those who suffered in the notorious Black Rock prison.

This precious little book deals with twenty of the problems and questions God’s people may have concerning whether their religion is real or not. James Fraser does not deal with these questions in an abstract way, but rather as they concern himself personally.

We recommend this little book, and because of its excellence subjoin the answer to the first deep concern – how he himself personally found the answer: “Because there was not such a distinct, long, orderly and deep work of preparation and humiliation at first conversion as I found described in practical books writing of the new birth.”

“There was a work of the almighty power of Christ discovering sin and a natural condition as the greatest evils, which put me out to restless endeavours to come out of this; and I found the inability of myself and all duties to bring me out of this condition. And the Lord did by a marvellous light discover the Lord Jesus to me as the Saviour of sinners and their full happiness; and my heart immediately closed with Him wholly and fully, which in its fruits has continued to this day.

“Secondly, what though the substantial of conversion be observed generally amongst all, yet do not all persons’ cases agree as to the circumstantial of conversion, that is, as to the length, measure and manner of the spirit of bondage, as is likewise clear from Scripture.

“Thirdly, the question is not so much how Christ came in, as if He be in. If you find the fruits of holiness, it is well, though you know not how they were sown or grown. ‘The kingdom of God cometh not with observation’ (Luke 17. 20).”

Makers of Puritan History, by Marcus L. Loane; hardback; 235 pages; price £14.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Archbishop Loane is an excellent writer. He has a thorough knowledge of his subject and writes in a pleasing style, which along with the importance of the subject makes the book profitable.

Makers of Puritan History deals with Alexander Henderson, Samuel Rutherford, John Bunyan and Richard Baxter. The times were stormy and the seventeenth century was an amazing period, with much turmoil, both politically and ecclesiastically.

We are very touched to read of Baxter's sufferings for Jesus' sake, especially the disgraceful treatment he received as an old man in extreme weakness from the notorious Judge Jeffreys. It would have been better if the author had referred more clearly to Baxter's doctrinal errors. As the compiler of the recent *Day by Day with the English Puritans* has stated: "While most Puritans admired Baxter's godly life, they seriously questioned his unorthodox doctrine of justification."

As well as giving the life story of each Puritan in a most interesting way, the author gives an appraisal of his character, his preaching and his writings – which will make the work appeal more to the student.

Sir Marcus Loane, as he became, was certainly eminent in the religious world, being Archbishop of Sydney and Primate of Australia. As far as we can tell, he was one of the best men in the Church of England, standing for the principles of the Reformation. He died only this year at the advanced age of 98. Because of his importance, an obituary appeared in the *Daily Telegraph*, but it was very sad to read the contempt poured on him for his "narrow-minded Puritanism."

Altogether a book of quality!

Word Wise: God's Amazing Book, Volume 1, by Alison Brown, large paperback; 32 pages; price £3.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a book for children (aged 8-11), and we feel it is a good one.

Briefly, simply and clearly the story is told, from creation, through the Old Testament, down to the New. Special emphasis is given to Genesis and the Gospels. Great reverence is shown for the authority of Scripture and much stress is laid on God as the Creator.

The book is illustrated and there are many word searches, jumbled sentences, number codes and crosswords. However, we were pleased to note that the jumbled sentences or words are never the holy Word of God.

Just in one or two places the wording could have been more exact, and parents will need to explain. For instance (page 28): "The Bible teaches that anyone can receive the Lord Jesus Christ," where the simple point seems to be not just one race or class or nation.

We think most parents will feel *Word Wise* will be a help.

Many, indeed, are the afflictions of the righteous; afflictions peculiar to themselves, as well as afflictions endured in common with their fellow-men; but many, also, are their supports and consolations. These are truly peculiar to themselves, unknown and unfelt by a suffering, unbelieving world. Even here, while sojourning through a valley of tears, they partake of the "hidden manna," and draw many a refreshing draught from the fountain of living waters. But their blessedness does not end here. The glorious secret which gladdens their hearts under all their sorrows is their future destination. They shall be "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." They shall "sit down with Christ on His throne," and "reign with Him for ever and ever."

Thomas Reade

OBITUARY

Ralph Charles Thomas Warboys, member of the church at Oakington for fifty years and minister of the gospel for thirty-eight years, passed peacefully away on November 2nd, 2008, aged 81.

My father was born on April 5th, 1927, in the same house in which he lived for the great majority of his life. It was his prayerful wish also to die in the same house and this indeed was granted.

The following is taken largely from his own writings, which were extensive:

My parents attended the Strict Baptist Chapel at Oakington, my mother already being a member of the church. Mr. E.G. Rowell was the pastor. One of my earliest memories is that of my father being baptized. This took place at Swavesey Chapel (at that time there being no baptistry at Oakington) on March 19th, 1930.

On a Sunday afternoon my mother would instruct us from the big family Bible which had belonged to her mother and is still in my possession. My brother and I would sit on the arms of her armchair. The instruction made a deep impression upon my mind in a moral way, to know good from evil, but alas as I grew up it is evident that I knew nothing savingly at this time. Although parents cannot give children grace, instruction in spiritual things and especially from the Word of God, cannot do them harm and may well be a "lamp to their feet."

My mother had a retentive memory, which I may have inherited, for memorising Scripture and hymns. She could recite the whole of the Epistle to the Ephesians, but how often one has to say with the poet, "My memory bad, but what is sad, can folly still retain." Never envy a person with a retentive memory – the same memory for hymns can remember sinful conversations, and so I prove it to this day. My delight at school was in such conversation to amuse my school fellows, and these things still come back to my mind.

I had a number of natural convictions in my youth, and realised what a sinner I was. I resolved to amend my life. No longer would I say such things, but alas as it was all in my own strength, like a sow that is washed, I returned to my wallowing in the mire.

During the period that we lived at Westwick Farm (1935-39) [in the hamlet adjoining Oakington] I had several escapes from death. On one occasion I was in a field with some of my father's men who were working on a piece of farm machinery at the edge of the field. On squeezing past them, I stepped or slipped into what appeared to be a puddle, as the water was level with the field. In fact it was a deep ditch, and I went into the water over my head, but the men heard me and pulled me out.

On another occasion, with some other boys, I was playing in a disused malting near Westwick Hall. The ground floor where we were playing was dark and gloomy. I was walking backwards in our game. For no human reason I stopped and looked over my shoulder. Behind me only a few feet away was an open well we had not known was there. Looking down the sheer sides, we could see water about six to eight feet below. Had I fallen in I could not have climbed out and the other boys could not have reached me. At the time of both events I could not swim.

However, in the Lord's time, a never-to-be-forgotten day came. Friday, June 20th, 1941, I was attending school and I quoted a scripture to a fellow

student in jest (nothing like as bad as many things I have said), and like an arrow to the heart, the thought came, "You have sinned the unpardonable sin." The state of my mind I cannot describe (hymn 806 latter part of verse 1: "O to feel cuts deep beyond expression.") I felt I would drop into hell at any moment. Satan suggested I might as well take my life and showed me the means, but in the next few days there began to be a hope that there might be mercy even for me. But I felt the justness of my condemnation (a mark of distinction between a natural conviction and a Holy Spirit one). I could take you to the spot where the poet's words were indeed my own:

"Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce Thee just in death;
And if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

I would often find some secret place and fall on my knees, begging for mercy like the young man in Lamentations 3. 27-30: "He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope." It was a comfort to me to read of these words, for I was now reading the Bible with new eyes. At first I was embarrassed to read the Bible during the evening in front of my family, but felt the solemnity of the Lord's word regarding being ashamed of Him. Often in the evening, still feeling the weight of my sins (although I had received forgiveness as about to be related), I would leave my homework and the family circle and go into the darkened kitchen and fall on my knees begging for forgiveness. My mother came in on one occasion and found me on my knees. She did not say anything but just gave me a kiss.

Only sixteen days after my conviction, I was weeping and mourning over my sins on the Lord's day morning July 6th, 1941 before getting up, and these words came with such power to my soul: "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." I leaped out of bed and fell on my knees, praising and thanking God for His mercy through Jesus Christ. However, before long I was tempted that it was all a delusion, and next Lord's day morning, again before rising, I was praying for a confirmation and the Lord spoke: "I Jesus died to redeem thee; walk in the way."

At this time, when reading and meditating upon the Word of God, scriptures would be opened up to me in ways I had never seen before, and the thought came that one day I would have to preach, but being so shy and backward in speaking of spiritual things, I did not see how it could come to pass. It was in fact twenty-nine years later, in December 1970, that I first preached in public, at Lakenheath.

The Lord's words to me: "Walk in the way," I realised meant walking in the fear of the Lord, but also felt it meant in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper. At this time I was only fourteen years old and very shy and I put it off and, sad to relate, I confess with shame it was not until nearly eighteen years later that I was baptized.

Perhaps because of my disobedience I came into much darkness and Psalm 107, verses 10 to 21, were my experience for many months.

In 1942, the night of July 30th-31st, I was helping my uncle with the harvest at his farm alongside the A45 (now A428). Most of his land had been taken for Bourn aerodrome and the three hangars now visible from the main road were being built. Early in the morning (about 2 a.m.) a German bomber was

heard circling overhead and I saw a flare coming down on a parachute and it set light to a shock of corn. My uncle and I went out and put the fire out with buckets of water and he told me to go one way round the buildings while he went the other to see if there were any more fires.

While I was about half way between the farm drive and the hangars near the trees that still exist, the plane still circling above, I heard the whistle of bombs. I threw myself flat on the ground and mercifully, although in the direct line of the "stick" of bombs, one fell between myself and the main road to my left and the others to my right and my life was spared.

Whilst I was at the Technical College we had a lot of homework, especially during the first year, 1941 to 1942. Around October 1941, Mr. Hayler was expected to preach one week evening and I felt a strong desire to be present. With three hours homework (which was the normal amount) it did not seem possible. However, I made it a matter of prayer and when after the first lesson the master said, "There will be no homework tonight," my heart leaped within me and the same thing took place with each of the three masters who were due to give us homework for that evening.

So I went to the service and Mr. Hayler preached from Psalm 27, part of verse 9: "Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." The service lasted two hours (this was normal for Mr. Hayler) and I would not have minded if it had lasted another two. This was one of my first blessings under the ministry, and that prayer of the psalmist has been my prayer continually, and is to this day. With regard to the homework, this was the only occasion this occurred during that term, and I never did know the natural reason, but I believe I know the real answer.

Where there is a concern for one's own soul, I am sure there will be a concern for the souls of others. From 1941 to 1943 I attended a Technical College where we had a master who took us for English. He used openly to tell people he was an atheist, which was unusual in those days. Ezekiel 3. 18 was much upon my mind and made me tremble. ("When I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.") But I did not see how I could warn him of his solemn condition. However, on one occasion he instructed us to learn something of our own choice to recite. Bearing in mind his atheistic beliefs, in much trepidation I recited Psalm 53 ("The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God there is none that doeth good," etc.) After I had recited it, he said he thought I could have chosen something more cheerful, or words to that effect. About two weeks later he died suddenly, but my conscience was clear – he had been warned.

Although I was eligible for call up for the forces in 1945 and I had a medical examination, I was reserved for two years until those telecommunication staff in the forces were released. [*My father had joined The Post Office, later to become British Telecom, for whom he worked for forty-three years.*] I realised that eventually I would have to do National Service and on July 3rd, 1947, was called up for the Army, reporting to the barracks at Bury St. Edmunds, where I did primary training for six weeks.

I write with shame now, that to read my Bible I would take it to the toilet instead of reading it in the barrack room. I well remember that at this time I was

reading the minor prophets and the Lord had mercy on me, and they were richly blessed to my soul. In August I was posted to Catterick Camp, Yorkshire, where I remained for almost a year, being trained and latterly as an instructor. On the Lord's day I generally stayed in bed late reading my Bible. In the afternoon I would take my Bible on to the moors and also write a letter home. In the evening I would go to a service in one of the camp churches.

I begged the Lord that when my training was complete (it was a nine month technical course after the basic training course), I would have a home posting, that is, remain in this country so that I could attend services. At first it seemed my prayer was answered and I was made an instructor at Catterick.

However, as on so many occasions, we have had to prove His ways are not our ways, or His thoughts our thoughts (Isa. 55. 8). The Russians besieged Berlin and the Allies mounted what became known as the "Berlin Airlift." Additional communication staff were needed and it was decided to send the junior instructors, of which I was one. Initially we were sent to Ripon where there was a transit camp. I was still praying that after all I might remain in this country. Whilst awaiting posting, I was on an early morning fatigue. One morning there was a fog and in the valley below I could hear a sheep bleating. The thought came to me that it was calling because of being separated from the flock, but the shepherd would know where it was. I felt I was like that sheep in wanting a home posting, but that if abroad the Lord would still be with me. *[My father was stationed at Buckeburg, near Hamlyn, for two years before being demobilised on July 15th, 1949, "a momentous two years," as he describes it. He often mentioned the utter devastation caused in that area by Allied bombing.]*

I had started motorcycling in 1943 as I needed quicker transport than a bicycle and could not afford a car. By 1951 I had motorcycled many thousands of miles (although for part of that time I had been in the Army) without having an accident. In those days it was not the custom for motorcyclists to wear a crash helmet, and indeed they were only available in specialist shops in places like London. I wore a soft leather helmet which kept my head warm but would have provided no protection in the event of an accident.

In 1951, I was working away from home in the town of Hertford, where I lodged from Monday to Friday and returned to Oakington for the weekend. In March it was deeply impressed upon my mind (and subsequent events proved it was from the Lord) that I ought to obtain a crash helmet, and as these were available in a shop (Pride & Clarke Ltd, Stockwell Road) in South London, I used a half-day of my annual holiday on the Wednesday afternoon and went to London. However, I found the shop was closed, but the matter was so deeply impressed upon my mind that I had the Thursday afternoon off and again went to London and bought a helmet.

I came home as usual on the Friday evening and on the Monday morning left home at about seven o'clock to return to Hertford. As I was travelling along the Trumpington Road in Cambridge near the junction with Bentley Road, I saw a delivery van proceeding slowly along, and just as I started to overtake, it turned right across in front of me. I could not possibly stop in time and hitting the front wing of the van I was thrown over the bonnet and landed on my head on the road, on the other side of the van.

The helmet I had bought only four days previously, humanly speaking, saved my life, but it is to God we give thanks that after so many years of

motorcycling, He impressed upon my mind that I should get the helmet which I was wearing when the need arose. My leg was injured and it was a month before I was able to return to work, but the Lord had mercifully preserved my life.

Often I went to Bethel, Luton, on a Wednesday evening. On one occasion hymn 281 is mentioned in my diary ("Is mine a contrite heart, or no?") Another occasion Mr. Collier preached from the "Balm of Gilead," and it was a good hearing time.

One occasion I well remember, Mr. Collier was reading from John 8, but my eyes wandered across the Bible to John 9. 25. I was feeling tried as to whether I knew anything savingly or not, but I felt I could come in with the former blind man's words: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." I did feel sure on that point.

[My parents married on July 11th, 1953. My Grandfather had had 71 Longstanton Road built in 1924 and said that when the existing tenant left, my parents could live there, so in April 1953 my father started work on various matters to carry out improvements, although it was another eleven months before they moved in. Later on they bought the property from him.] I applied for a transfer to Cambridge. With all the concerns at the time I had sweetness from the words, "My grace is sufficient for thee," and so we have proved it to this day over forty years later. Mr. Sperling-Tyler preached at Edmonton at this time from, "Fear not," which was made a help.

All this time I was concerned about baptism. "Wait upon the Lord," was upon my mind. On April 14th, 1957, Mr. Rootham preached from, "Blessed are those that wait upon the Lord." When he came next on Wednesday, May 8th, after the service I told him it had been made a blessing to me. This was the first time I had spoken to a minister regarding blessing received under their ministry. Mr. John Green preached from, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed," and I felt with a grain of faith that mountain of baptism would one day depart. At this time there were no male members at Oakington and I knew that joining the church would immediately result in much responsibility.

My exercises regarding baptism and the Lord's supper increased and it eventually rested upon my mind like this: If a person was to say, "The Lord has never spoken to me with power to say I should not steal or that I should keep His day, and therefore I can go and steal or disregard His day," we would say, "It is plain in the Scriptures and you should not need, or expect, words with power to do these things laid down in His Word."

I felt guilty of this, and that I was dictating to the Lord. Eventually after Mr. John Green had preached on the Lord's day April 26th, 1959, I told him and also Mrs Prior, church member, of my desire to join. On the 28th Mr. Harwood preached from, "Shew me a token for good," which was encouraging, and also Mr. Charles Buss on May 10th from Isaiah 50. 10.

On May 27th, I came before the church, Mr. Green presiding, and was unanimously received. On Friday, June 5th, 1959, I was baptized by Mr. Green. From July onwards I conducted reading services, taking everything in the service and playing the organ as well.

In the late 1960s I attended a course at the Bexhill Management College. I went to a prayer meeting at The Dicker Chapel. Mr. Sperling-Tyler read and commented upon Isaiah 53. The words that went home to me were, "He was despised and rejected of men, and if you follow Christ you also will be despised

and rejected.” I had passed through that experience that day and it was a word in season, although of course he knew nothing of my case.

On October 9th, 1959 I appeared before a promotion board in London. At the end of the interview the Chairman said, “We would like you to come and work in London.” I replied that I considered it too far to travel each day. He said “O, we don’t expect you to travel; all your removal expenses will be paid.” I answered, “I am deacon of a Baptist Chapel and I believe God has placed me there and I am not prepared to put natural prosperity before what I consider to be my spiritual duty.” There was a surprised silence as the members of the board looked at me. I felt they had been given many reasons why people did not want to move to London, but they had never been given that reason before! Consequently when later I heard officially that I had passed the board, I completed my mobility as being Cambridge, Bedford, Peterborough only. Almost immediately I was offered a post at Bedford and commenced there on April 6th, 1970, travelling daily.

Ever since the Lord called me by grace in 1941 I had felt that one day I would have to preach the gospel. During the 1960s this exercise increased.

Mr. Harwood of Godmanchester often preached week evenings at Oakington. On October 19th, 1960 he preached for what proved to be the last occasion, from Jeremiah 1. 7, 8: “But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.” This word went home to me and I felt it was meant for me.

Mr. Case preached from, “Go in this thy might ... have not I sent thee?” (Judges 6. 14). This I felt was for me, although my reply was that of Gideon in verse 15.

At the anniversary service in 1970, Mr. Collier read Luke 9 and the last four verses were laid with weight on my mind, especially verse 60: “But go thou and preach the kingdom of God.”

Like Gideon I wanted another token, and one Lord’s day Mr. Wiffen preached from Revelation 3. 8: “Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.”

In September at the Thanksgiving Service Mr. Wood preached from Psalm 126. 6: “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

As a result of these leadings, I felt I had to make the matter known to the church. Mr. John Green said he had felt for a long time that I was carrying this burden. Other members also later said that they were expecting this, which surprised me.

At a church meeting on November 27th, 1970, I preached before the church, Mr. John Green and Mr. Oliver Pack. I preached from Luke 9. 60, and it was unanimously agreed that I should be sent out, and Mr. Green prayed for God’s blessing on my labours.

At about this time, Mr. E. Hadley, pastor of Lakenheath, had a stroke and Lakenheath had many vacant dates. Almost immediately I was asked to preach there, which I did on Lord’s day December 6th, 1970, the text being from 2 Kings 25. 27-30: “It came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin....”

I well remember my first visit to Stotfold (Wednesday, April 21st, 1971). The evening before as I sought for a text, the Bible seemed to have a chain and padlock around it. I knew that from the time I left the office at Bedford there would be little time for meditation before the service. As I journeyed that morning I was begging the Lord to give me a word. My journey to Bedford took me through St. Neots (the bypass not then being built) and to avoid the town centre I used to go through Cromwell Road. Although I had been along this road scores of times during the year, I observed for the first time the word "GRACE" on the water tower behind the factory of W.R. Grace and Co., and how grace was over all (as the poet puts it. "The topmost stone.") As I meditated it seemed to open to me as the oil of grace in the Scriptures. That evening I spoke from 2 Kings 4. 2: "What hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil."

Next morning, I looked at the water tower again and the word GRACE had gone as they were repainting the tower (subsequently it was reinstated) but what perfect timing the Lord showed. Had the painters started a day earlier, it would not have been there when required.

The first time I preached at Ashwell on June 20th, 1971 is impressed on my memory. Normally I used my Triumph Vitesse for preaching engagements, leaving the Ford Zodiac at home for my wife. On the Saturday my wife had used the Vitesse which, being a small car, was suitable for shopping, and had put it away as usual. When I wanted to go to Ashwell on the Sunday morning it just would not start. I tried several things like cleaning the ignition parts but all to no avail, so I took the Zodiac. As soon as I drove off Satan came powerfully into my mind with this temptation: "You're only a Balaam." Balaam's ass was stopped and although he was allowed to go and he spoke the truth, he did not know anything savingly himself. "You're only a Balaam."

These words, "You're only a Balaam," rang in my ears for weeks and I trembled under it. Although I did not mention it to anyone, it brought me to the throne of grace begging for mercy on my soul.

Three months later on September 29th, I attended a special service at Ashwell when Mr. Sperling-Tyler of The Dicker was preaching. He spoke from 1 Corinthians 10. 13: "Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." He entered into my case as if I had told him all about it and the snare was broken in the same chapel to which I went that Lord's day when the temptation came.

In January 1973 I was engaged to preach at Haynes one week evening and the text was, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths they have not known" (Isa. 42. 16). When we came out of the chapel it was quite foggy and knowing that I would have to return to Bedford in the morning, several kind friends suggested that I stay the night with them, but I said I would like to return home.

After a mile or so the fog became the thickest I have ever known except for a London smog, when one had to walk slowly to avoid walking into a lamppost. No other traffic was moving and I drove with the driver's window down, on the wrong side of the road to see the verge, as I could not see the verge on the near side. I headed for Southill and found myself in Sandy. I crossed over the A1 intending to go home via Wrestlingworth, but did a complete circle in Sandy and

found myself on the A1 again! Eventually I found the Wrestlingworth road but after a mile found it closed with a barrier right across. On returning to Sandy, I then saw a notice that the road was closed, which I had not seen before as I could not see the width of the road. However, the fog then cleared somewhat and I arrived home, the journey taking two hours for thirty miles, of which the first one-and-a-half hours must have been for the first ten miles. All this time the text I had been preaching from was on my mind and I always associate it with that journey.

[In August 1994 my Father suffered an obstruction in the stomach, which turned out to be cancer. He continues:] As I was being taken to the operating theatre Psalms 23 and 121 were a comfort to me, especially, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me." This was my first text after the operation, at Oakington on the September 1st.

After the two hour operation, I regained consciousness and was in great pain, but mercifully after a time this eased. I returned home on Friday, August 23rd and proved the illustration of the late Mr. Kemp of Luton to be true: "When I was in hospital I was nursed with kindness, but on my return home I was nursed with lovingkindness" (Psa. 107. 43). I was very thankful to be kept from rebellion (we cannot keep ourselves). David's words in 2 Samuel 15. 25, 26 were continually in my thoughts especially, "Behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him." This was my text in the evening of September 1st. Also in my thoughts, although not impressed with the power that some promises have been, was, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord" (Psa. 118. 17).

I felt most tried over the period August 17th to September 3rd, 2004 in having to preach eleven out of twelve sermons from Genesis 8. 22. I just could not get away from it and felt liberty and fresh matter on each occasion.

On December 17th, 2007, I visited my doctor to ask for an examination as I had been having shortness of breath after exertion. He examined me and suggested that I should have my chest x-rayed, and this took place the next day. He telephoned to say there was a shadow on my right lung and was sorry to give me worrying news just before Christmas. I replied I was not worried and indeed I felt as I did when in the army in Germany when I was given my demobilisation date: "I am going home at last."

The operation to remove the upper right lobe took place on February 19th, 2008. I was unconscious for almost eight-and-a-half hours. I returned home on February 26th. On March 23rd, I spoke at Oakington for a short time from, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11. 4). I recommenced my ministry but generally sat down to preach, the last occasion being at Oakington on August 3rd from the whole of Psalm 23. *Here his own account ends.*

From April onwards my father suffered increasing pain and it was diagnosed that the cancer had spread through his body. He writes: "Spiritually I felt to be much in the condition of Job, but the Lord gave me some sweetness in considering John 14 especially, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' But on September 11th, the Lord dropped in these words: 'The Lord hath come and appeared unto Simon.' The actual words in Luke 24. 34 are: 'The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.'"

Mercifully the great pain he had suffered earlier was removed and though increasingly weak, he was able to bear the illness without any complaint. Towards the end he was not able to say very much, his voice often being too weak to be understood, but it was clear his thoughts and prayers were for the family and other friends from various chapels. Over the years my father had often referred to John 21. 19: "By what death he should glorify God," and asked, "Will your death and mine glorify God?" He was concerned that his mind might fail and he would resort to the language he had used as a boy, but we feel his prayer in this regard was abundantly answered. He had also mentioned many times Matthew 25. 6: "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh," and prayed to be ready for that time. It was very confirming that he died at midnight, on Lord's day November 2nd, 2008. The funeral service was conducted by Mr. G.E. Hadley and the interment, at Oakington cemetery, was conducted by Mr. P.B. Pont. There was a very large attendance, the chapel, schoolroom and lobby all being filled with many former work colleagues, villagers and many friends from other chapels, reflecting the affection in which he was held by those he came into contact with in so many different ways.

C.P.W.

MINISTERS' MEETING FOR PRAYER

About seventeen of our ministers met for prayer on Saturday, November 7th, at Clifton Chapel. The prayers were marked by godly sorrow and humble confession along with pleading for the Lord's blessing and that He will return to us in mercy.

The following ministers prayed: Mr. Jabez Rutt (Pastor, Lamberhurst); Mr. J.R. Ince (Pastor, Nottingham); Mr. B.R. Sayers (Blunsdon Hill); Mr. T.J. Pocock (Pastor, South Moreton); Mr. J.B. Hart (Rotherfield); Mr. R.K. Wheatley (Pastor, Cranbrook); Mr. G.E. Hadley (Pastor, Stotfold); and Mr. A.W. Chapman (Ashwell). Committee member, Mr. F.R. Ince (Fitzwilliam) closed the meeting with prayer and the benediction.

During the meeting the following passages were read: Zechariah 1. 12-17; Psalm 80. 7-19; 1 Timothy 4. 9-16, and hymns 1082 and 958 were sung.

As the meeting was arranged in response to the invitation from our Committee, the non-Committee ministers were given the preference in being called on to pray.

The meeting was presided over by the Editor, who made a few solemn comments on the vital importance of the minister's life and behaviour, the necessity of his standing firmly when there is inconsistency in church behaviour, and Mr. F.L. Gosden's strong plea that ministers should watch they do not "give out more than they take in."

At the beginning a verse by John Newton was read:

“May He, by whose kind care we meet,
Send His good Spirit from above,
Make our communications sweet,
And cause our hearts to burn with love!”

We felt this prayer was answered.

THE END OF THE YEAR

Another year is gone,
And I still live on earth;
Death has its millions swept away,
Since God first gave me birth.

The moments just appear,
Then instantly are fled,
And the next fleeting moment may
Lodge me amongst the dead.

Good God, make bare Thine arm!
Bless me with vital faith
In Christ, the Covert from each storm,
And Antidote of death.

Midst all the cares of life,
Teach me to keep in view
That Captain who can end my strife,
And make me conqueror too.

His sin-atoning blood
With energy apply;
Teach me to make Him mine abode,
And on His arm rely.

At His dear, piercèd feet,
And near His loving heart,
May I each moment take my seat,
Nor once from thence depart.

There musing on His grace,
I would my minutes spend;
The openings of His goodness trace,
And on His love depend.

Then let time swiftly fly,
And death its dart discharge;
My endless home's beyond the sky,
Where I shall walk at large.

William Gadsby (1773-1844)

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OUR MAGAZINES

We bless God that “having obtained help of God, we continue to this day.” Our desire is that the Lord will still be with us. Next year marks the 175th Anniversary of the founding of the *Gospel Standard*, and our prayerful desire is that it may still proclaim the same glorious truths that William Gadsby delighted in.

The Editor