

# THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

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"JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TODAY, AND FOR EVER."  
"ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND  
OF PEACE."

"COMFORT YE, COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE, SAITH YOUR GOD."

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## EDITORIAL

There is a great deal of make-believe and wishful thinking about the beginning of a new year. Although, from one point of view, the first of January is simply one more date in the calendar, yet men vaguely feel that it marks some kind of step forward. Things perhaps may be different. A new day may dawn. So they wish one another 'a happy new year'.

Charles Dickens had a character in one of his books called Mr. Micawber. He was always waiting for something to turn up. He was the perennial optimist. Wishful thinking was his creed. But there are many Mr. Micawbers. They live their lives vaguely hoping that either they or their circumstances may improve. Instead of which they only find that they get older, and circumstances always seem to contain a heavy element of difficulty.

There is indeed a lesson to be learnt if only men were not so blind. The beginning of a new year is a reminder of the passage of time. It is a reminder, too, that the clock cannot be stopped, nor the calendar checked in its movement. Life is passing and each year—indeed each day—brings men nearer to the hour of death and the day of judgment.

For a man who sits under a gospel ministry, and who has not yet responded to the message, a new year brings an even more solemn reminder. Fifty-two weeks more of opportunity have come and gone, and he is still in his sins. The call of the prophet should surely ring in his ears: 'Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts:

and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon' (Isaiah 55 : 6-7).

But the Christian should also learn lessons. Time for him is also passing. True, it is not one step more towards the darkness of eternal despair, but one step nearer home. But it is also one step towards the day when he shall have to give an account to the Lord of his stewardship. The questions then will be—how did he use the talents the Lord entrusted to him; how faithful was he in redeeming the precious time allocated to him; how disciplined was he in his prayer life; how diligent in his quest for holiness; how faithful in his witness; how whole-hearted in his service?

But there is also a word of reassurance. New years have been coming and going since the first dawn of human history, and the providence of God has never failed His people. The waves of time have for over nineteen centuries beaten against the Church of Christ, but founded on the apostolic testimony she has demonstrated the faithfulness of the Lord's promise: 'The gates of hell shall not prevail'. Time may flow irresistibly on. The years may come and go. But the truth of God stands firm—Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever.

H.M.C.

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*For thy unthankfulness, O England, He suffers false teachers to be a burden to thee, whom, if thou dost receive and allow their doctrine, be thou well assured His great wrath comes shortly to thy destruction. This is the accustomed order of God when He is minded to destroy—first, He sends lying spirits, then suffers the people to be deceived by the same to their destruction as He did Ahab.—From John Knox's 'Admonition to England'.*

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*Believers are insured for this life and the next, for Christ is their Guarantor and will not allow any of them to be plucked out of His hand and be lost.—DR. H. BAVINCK.*

# Righteousness

H. M. CARSON

*A sermon preached in Hamilton Road Baptist Church, Bangor, Co. Down, on Sunday, 29th October, 1972.*

'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.'

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written. The just shall live by faith.' (Romans 1 : 16, 17).

'In the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.'

Paul has been speaking in this chapter about his ambition to visit Rome, and not only to visit Rome, but to press on beyond Rome to Spain. He is constantly concerned to reach men and women with the gospel. He is never satisfied because he has reached a certain area or certain communities of people. There are always more people to hear. And his reason for being so concerned to reach others with the gospel is that he has a deep sense of indebtedness. He has been put in trust with the gospel. God has given him a message and he cannot keep this message to himself. This message is one which he must spread, he must share with others. Then he indicates another element in his thinking. He is very sure of the message, not because it is his, although in a very deep and real sense it is his message, for it has burned its way into his very soul. But he is very sure of the message because it is God's message. So he says, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth'.

He puts it in a rather negative fashion. He might well have said—I glory in the gospel; I exult in the gospel. But I believe he puts it in this negative way, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel' because of the situation into which he was going. He was going into the city of Rome, where men were very sure of themselves. Arrogance and pride were two of the great characteristics of the Roman citizen, and Paul, as far as they were concerned, was an insignificant nonentity from one of the eastern provinces. They would dismiss him out of hand. What is Paul's reaction? It is that whatever the opinions of men may be, he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

He will meet the philosophers in Rome. Seneca, the great Stoic, is exerting a powerful influence in these days and he is

jostling for position with the Epicurean philosophers, with the Pythagoreans in the background. Well, they will probably dismiss Paul with contempt, as the Athenians dismissed him on Mars Hill. Still, he writes, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ'. Whatever the opinion of men may be and whatever their superior attitude may be, he is persuaded that in this message the very truth of God and the wisdom of God and the power of God are made known. So why should he be brow-beaten by the intellectuals of Rome? Why should he capitulate to current opinion there? This message is God's gospel. This message concerns God's Son and God's way of salvation. He is not ashamed of it. He delights to preach it, and he will continue to preach it. And his reason is that 'in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith'.

Now if Paul is talking like this, 'I want to preach the gospel to you in Rome, I want to press on beyond Rome to Spain, I want to take the gospel to men and women of every tongue to which I can go, I am not ashamed of the gospel'—then at once we are entitled to say—Well, Paul, what is this gospel? What is it all about? And this is Paul's answer to that question. If you are a Christian and you were asked the question by one of your non-Christian friends—What is this gospel about anyway? (it is the kind of question they are liable to ask)—what kind of answer would you give?

I suspect that quite a few Christians would start talking about the peace which God gives and the joy that He gives, and the sense of direction and purpose that He gives, and the hope that He gives. Paul would say—Yes, all this is true, but all these things are subsidiary, they follow on. Indeed, as Paul writes this letter, and gives his classic statement of the gospel, he does not come to the subject of joy and peace and hope until chapter five, and that is a long way ahead yet as far as this epistle is concerned. These certainly are important elements in the gospel, for the Christian does find peace with God. The Christian does experience the joy of the Lord in his heart, and he does have a hope which enables him to face death. But these things follow. These are the results, the consequences of his experience of the gospel. What, then, is the gospel itself all about? Well, Paul says, it is about righteousness. This is the basic theme, and if we do not talk to our non-Christian friends about righteousness, we are not really talking about the gospel which Paul expounded; we are simply talking about some aspects of the gospel or some consequences of the gospel. Paul says the gospel is all about righteousness.

Now Paul was writing to people who lived in the city of Rome, and when he used the word righteousness at once it

would register—they would know what he was talking about. One of the great gifts which the Roman Empire gave to the world was the tradition of law and order. Indeed, that was the disaster of the early Middle Ages when the Roman Empire collapsed, there was a complete breakdown of law and order and you had widespread anarchy. The thing that really marked the Roman Empire was that it was a place of stability. There was security, there was law and order. Any Roman citizen and anyone in the provinces would be very thankful that the Roman system of law prevailed, so that in every Roman town there would be the law courts. There was such a thing as Roman law—indeed, any law student in the universities today will in part of his course probably study Roman law, which lies at the basis of a great deal of English law. The law courts were there, the judge was there, there would be appeal ultimately reserved to the supreme judge of the Empire, the Emperor himself. So any Roman citizen would at once know what Paul was talking about. Righteousness had to do with law, it had to do with keeping the law. The righteous man was the man who kept the law; the unrighteous man was the man who broke the law. And in Roman legal thinking an unrighteous man was brought before the courts and, because Roman law was impartial, if he was brought before a judge and a verdict of guilty was brought against him, then a sentence was pronounced and he was punished in accordance with the crime he had committed. So righteousness is law-keeping, unrighteousness is law-breaking.

But the Christian who received Paul's letter would understand that Paul is not simply talking about the law courts of the Empire, he is not talking about Roman law being broken and a Roman sentence being imposed by a Roman magistrate. He is speaking about God's law, God's fundamental law given in the Old Testament in the ten commandments, but written deep into the heart of every man who in his creation receives a conscience in which God speaks to him concerning His demands. The Roman citizen could appreciate not only the basic fact of law, but he could understand that if God is the Judge of all men, and if God has given His law, then God will inevitably, being just, call men to account for their law-breaking. So Paul says the gospel is basically about law-keeping, it is about righteousness.

The issue which really confronts us is—How can I stand in the law court of my Creator and be accepted? Now this is not the question which men ask. When they begin to talk to you about the gospel they are interested to know—How can I get my problems solved? How can I get myself sorted out? How

can I get some sense of direction? How can I find a real measure of peace and security these days? You will notice their emphasis! They are asking—How can *I* remain in the centre of things and get all the uncomfortable and unpleasant details sorted out so that I can find a stable and secure way of living?

Now to this kind of question Paul's answer would be that we cannot begin to deal with this until we have dealt with the fundamental question. After all, if a man is appearing on a capital charge in the law court, the big issue at that precise point is not what kind of wallpaper he is going to select for his lounge when he comes home, or what kind of television set he is going to purchase, but how he is going to fare when he faces a judge and a jury. Any other issue simply fades into insignificance. If he is going to spend the next twenty years in prison, it really matters not a whit about all the other things that might normally jostle for his attention. The one thing that matters is how will he stand before the judge; what answer will he give; and even more important, what verdict will be pronounced.

So when men are asking, How can I get my life sorted out? How can I get a sense of purpose? How can I get joy and peace, and all the rest? We have to say—Before we can look at these matters we must face the basic issue, which is righteousness. The basic question is—How can you and how can I stand in God's law court and face the charge that is laid against us? Now, says Paul, this is what the gospel is really about; the gospel is about righteousness; it is about law-keeping. It is about the basic question—How can the law-breaker (and the sinner is precisely that, someone who has broken the law of God), how can he stand in God's Assize Court and answer the charges which are laid against him? God's righteousness, Paul maintains, is revealed in the gospel, and the word that he uses for 'revealed' is basically the same word that is used for the last book of the Bible—Revelation or Apocalypse. Paul is saying that in the gospel the veil is drawn aside and you really see what righteousness means. But you see more, you see how righteousness can become yours; how you who are unrighteous by nature and by deed can be accepted by God as righteous. This is what it is all about.

Righteousness, then, is revealed in the gospel. But the gospel is constantly pointing you to one central point and the central point is the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly when you listen to Paul preaching you are always being brought back to this theme. He wrote to the Corinthians, 'I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified'. This is what I am interested in, he

says. I want to tell people about Christ—who He is, what He has done and what He can do for those who truly seek Him. Now, in Christ the righteousness of God is revealed. You discover what this righteousness really means when you look at Christ. God has explained it, not simply in legal terminology, for some of us might find that very hard to understand. If you have looked at an insurance policy or if you have looked at a deed of purchase for a house, you marvel at the incredible ability of the solicitor to understand what it is all about. It is completely beyond most of us and the ‘whoso-evers’ and the ‘hereinafters’ and all the rest which straggle across the page leave most of us gasping, it is just beyond us. There is a mystique, of course, about it all, but for most ordinary mortals legal terminology is very heavy going.

The Lord does not, however, explain righteousness in a complicated legal terminology that is so difficult that an ordinary soul will find it very hard to understand. He explains it in a way that anyone can understand, because He explains it through a baby sitting on a woman’s lap, and a boy growing up in an ordinary home; a man working at a carpenter’s bench and going out and meeting with his friends and speaking in a language we can understand, and doing things that we can grasp. This is how God explains righteousness. So if I am baffled by some intricate statement of what law is and the consequences of broken law, well, here is a very simple illustration. In fact here is the whole teaching embodied in a human life. We know what babies are like, we know what boys are like, we know what men and women are like; this is human life, this is something we can understand; we are in a realm where we move freely every day. And God says, Do you want to know what righteousness is, what My righteousness is? Here it is in flesh and blood. It is revealed in Jesus Christ.

What do you see? I have been saying that you see an ordinary child, an ordinary boy, an ordinary man—there is a sense in which that is true. I always suspect the carol which speaks of ‘the little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes’, because a baby that didn’t cry would not be a normal baby, there would be something quite peculiar about it. He was a real child. There was nothing make-believe about His humanity otherwise He is of no use to me as a Saviour if He hasn’t really shared my humanity. He was truly a child, truly a boy, He grew in wisdom and stature. He got bigger and He also grew more wise. He learnt obedience—He learnt it, it did not just come automatically. He learnt it by the things which He suffered. So He was a real man, and yet we have got to say something more. He was an ordinary man, but also He was an

extraordinary man. Ordinary in the sense that He shared the same kind of experiences as you and I. He was tempted in the same way as we are. He faced all the temptations that press in upon us. But the fundamental difference was that He did not give way; He was without sin. There is never a point at which you can say, Look, there is a flaw, there is an inconsistency. You can always say that about the greatest of the saints. Read their biographies and you will find—if the biographer has been honest in his presentation—that the greatest of God's saints have had many flaws and inconsistencies and blemishes. But when you look at Christ there is no blemish, no flaw, no failure.

But that is a very negative way of speaking, is it not? The New Testament, however, is not simply concerned to emphasise that He did not fail. His was not merely a negative righteousness. It was a dynamic and positive righteousness. He did not simply avoid the sin which means breaking God's law, but positively He kept God's law. He kept it in letter and in spirit. What is that law? Well, the Lord gave the summary Himself. 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' And again, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'. Did He keep the law? See the passionate love He has for His heavenly Father: see the close intimate bond of communion and His ready and complete obedience. Did He love His neighbour as Himself? Look at Him going about doing good, meeting the outcasts of society; not being trapped by the traditions of the day; not being so overwhelmed by respectability that He is inhibited from doing good; cutting through the hypocrisy and the formalism and the cant and the sham, and really meeting people in their need and helping them. Did He keep the law of God? Perfectly! perfectly! Do you want to know what righteousness is? Do you want to know what this gospel is about? Well, here is righteousness. Here it is, spelt out in detail, in an ordinary man who was a quite extraordinary man because, of course, this man was God Almighty taking our nature, becoming man for us and for our salvation.

But the gospels are not just a history book. They are not merely a biography giving you the life story of Jesus Christ—they are something more than that. They are an explanation of His life. In fact if you look at the gospels you find that they certainly are not like an ordinary biography. If you were judging them on those terms they would be very defective, because a biography tells you about a person's background, his upbringing, the influences that moulded him, and so on. However, when you read the gospels there is so much that is left

completely hidden and silent. You hear practically nothing about His childhood. There is one brief glimpse when He is twelve years old and then He disappears from view until He is about thirty years old. Indeed, the gospels only tell you about three years of His life, and they seem to be very unbalanced even then, because most of what they have to say is not about the three years but about the last seven days. So if they are biographies they are very strange biographies; they do not follow the normal pattern. But the answer is that they are not ordinary biographies, they are not intended to give you the rounded picture of a person's life. They are concerned to explain who He is and why He lived as He did, and what was in view in all He did. So by concentrating on that period of His public ministry and concentrating even more on the few days which led to His death and His resurrection, the gospels are saying—You have to realise that this Person came for a very special purpose. He came, not as we come to live our lives and perhaps to contribute to the community where we are, and help those with whom we come into contact. He came with a much bigger purpose. He came as a Saviour.

Before He was born it was spelt out to Mary and Joseph: 'You shall call His name Jesus'. Why? 'He will save His people from their sins.' So He is coming to act for His people. It links up with the Genesis story. Adam acted on behalf of his people. Adam acted on behalf of his posterity. He acted on behalf of those who were to follow him. He was put on probation. He failed, he sinned, he was alienated from God by his sin; and his whole posterity was alienated. He was the head of the old humanity. Well, this Christ is the head of the new humanity. He has come to do on their behalf what Adam did correspondingly on behalf of his posterity. Adam sinned, and through his disobedience sin and judgment became the lot of his posterity. Jesus Christ obeyed. He was righteous, and through Him righteousness becomes the characteristic of the new humanity.

We see then that everything He does He does for others. When He obeys God's law, it is not just to obey it Himself but He is obeying it on behalf of those He came to save. When He accepts in His own person at Calvary the penalty that inevitably comes to those who break God's law, He most assuredly is not doing it for Himself, for if He has not broken God's law it would be utterly unjust to inflict a penalty. There is no penalty as far as Jesus Himself is concerned, because He is innocent, He is blameless. But at Calvary He is still the representative; indeed, at this point He is supremely the representative, for He is acting on their behalf. So as He has obeyed the

law for them, now He accepts the penalty for them. So He was delivered, the just instead of, in the place of, the unjust, that He might bring us to God. So, asks Paul, do you want to know what righteousness means? There it is revealed quite clearly in Christ. He is the righteous One. But there you see something more: you see that this righteous One has come to save unrighteous ones. He has come to deal with the problem of our unrighteousness and our guilt and our sin and our condemnation; and in order to do that He has perfectly kept the law Himself, and He has gladly and willingly accepted the penalty.

So, says Paul, here is my gospel—in it the righteousness of God is revealed, it is shown forth, it is manifested. The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. Now if you look up your commentaries you will find much discussion about this faith. What does it mean—‘from faith to faith’? It seems to me that he is simply saying that at every point faith is the operative principle. At the very beginning it is faith which receives the righteousness of God. Right the way through it is faith by which we walk. Faith continues to develop, faith continues to grow, faith continues to mature, but it is always basically faith. So from faith to faith—this is the pattern of the Christian life. So it is righteousness received by faith, righteousness becoming an increasing reality through faith.

But this still leaves a further question—if this is so, what exactly is meant by faith? Your non-Christian friend will ask you that question as well. He will say to you—‘Yes, I am beginning to understand what you are talking about, that God is the Judge, and God requires us to live according to His law. It is true that we have sinned—I know that I have sinned, and I know that I am rightly under His judgment. Now you say that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One, and that His righteousness will be set to my account if I trust Him. Well, what does it mean, then, to believe in Him?’ Very often this is the practical question for the non-Christian—What does it mean to have faith?

Well, faith in the first place means hearing what God has to say. Faith, if you like, is the ear open to hear God’s Word. Faith is the eye open to see who Jesus Christ really is. I listen to what God says and faith assents, faith agrees to what God says. So I listen to God saying of Jesus Christ, ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased’, and faith says, ‘Yes, He is indeed the Son of God’. God’s Word says, ‘This Christ has been raised from the dead’, and faith says, ‘He is risen indeed, He is alive’. God’s Word says, ‘This Christ is able to save to the uttermost because He ever lives’, and faith says,

'Yes, He is a living Saviour; yes, He is able to save'. Faith, in other words, is the response to the Word. I am prepared to listen to what God has to say. I have been listening to men's opinions, I have been listening to my own theorising; now I listen to what God has to say.

But faith means more than just assenting to God's Word concerning Christ. Faith means trusting in the Christ about whom God's Word speaks. The patient in hospital must certainly assent in his mind as far as the skill of the surgeon is concerned; he must be persuaded that this surgeon is competent. But faith means not only the assent of the mind, it means the readiness to commit himself into the surgeon's hands. Or take the case of a man trapped in a blazing building. The fireman has come up the escape ladder and is going to take him down—well, faith does mean assent to certain truths; he must assent to the courage and to the ability and to the skill of the fireman, acknowledging that the training and constant practice he has gone through will enable him to bring this trapped man down. But faith means also the committal of himself. So that faith in Jesus Christ the righteous One is certainly the Amen of the soul to all that God has done in Christ, and it is also the consequent trust. I believe He is the Son of God, I believe He is the all-sufficient Saviour, I believe He is able to save to the uttermost, and I trust in Him as my Saviour, as my Lord and my God.

Now this faith, this saving faith, becomes vocal. It begins to express itself. It expresses itself first of all towards God. The sinner has stood in the law court. He has stood before the Judge of all the earth, and all his excuses have tumbled into confusion. Indeed, he has been reduced to silence. He has come to acknowledge that he is a law-breaker, that he is guilty, that he is worthy of condemnation, that he is worthy of hell. But he has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ the righteous One. He has heard the gospel of the One who can account him righteous, and acquit him and bring him forgiveness. And faith speaks to heaven, faith speaks to God, and faith says—I have got nothing, absolutely nothing. I have depended for so long on what I am and what I have done. I have tried to clothe myself with my own righteousness and now I see that I am just filthy, unclean, and utterly unfit for your presence. But Jesus Christ, your Son, has died, and in His Name I come and upon His work I depend, and I plead not my own righteousness which is not worth pleading, I plead His righteousness, His righteousness set to my account. So faith speaks heavenward.

Then faith begins to speak to others around. The Pharisee was ready to parade his own righteousness. He went with his long robes and his sanctimonious expression. He stood at the street corners and made his prayers and gave his alms, and people thought what a wonderful person he was. But Jesus' verdict was different! This righteousness is like a whitened sepulchre, covering corruption and sin, parading a righteousness of which he really ought to be ashamed. That is not the faith of which Paul is speaking, the faith which develops and matures. It is rather the faith which has accepted the verdict of 'guilty', has received the forgiveness of God, has received the righteousness of Christ, and then begins to speak to men and women around. The believer does not stand on a Pharisaic pedestal, looking down on the sinners below and sharing with them crumbs from the spiritually rich man's table. Rather, as a sinner speaking to fellow sinners he shares with them the good news of his Saviour.

What is the gospel about, what is its theme, what is its message? Its message is righteousness. And I preach this theme this morning, not simply that we may try to elucidate the meaning of the letter to the Romans; I preach it this morning that I may bring it home to your heart and mine. I preach it to Christians this morning. Have you realised the marvel of what God has done for you? Have you thrilled to the wonder of this great plan of salvation? He has not come simply to tidy up your life, and to give you an insurance policy for heaven. He has come to take you in your sin and your gilt, and your condemned and lost condition, and to forgive you freely for Christ's sake, and to acquit you and to declare you positively righteous, setting to your account the very righteousness and the very law-keeping of the Lord Jesus. Justified by faith—this is the great and grand theme of the gospel, and when a man has once appreciated this his heart overflows in praise and thanksgiving. It is a great gospel and a man will acknowledge its greatness when he has appreciated it in his own heart.

I preach it also this morning to any of you for whom it is still only a theory, merely something that a preacher has been talking about. Have I not made it plain this morning? I desperately want to make it plain. Not in order that you may go out and say—Well, he made the position fairly clear—but in order that I may make it so clear and so plain that you may feel that God is bringing this home to your heart and your conscience this morning. I want this word to come home in such a way that the response will be total. Yes, I want there to be the response of your mind. I want you to understand what

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# The Sovereignty of God

## PART I

S. M. HOUGHTON

Nowadays the term 'sovereignty' has, for most men, a much watered-down content. Whereas in earlier days it indicated a headship, a supremacy, an overlordship which could not be called in question, its modern significance is linked with a headship often merely titular, and deprived of much that formerly belonged to it. As far as sovereignty pertains to thrones of the earth, we are compelled to distinguish in this modern age between ruling and reigning. The sovereign reigns, by consent of those who raised him (or her) to a place of eminence, but does not rule. In monarchical states under democratic institutions the one reigns, the many rule, so that sovereignty has actually passed from the one who holds the sceptre to the body which makes the laws and controls the executive machinery, or rather, from the one to the members of the State who elect their representatives to the 'sovereign' assembly.

We must beware of conceiving of God's sovereignty in such terms as these. His sovereignty is an unchanging factor in heaven and earth and hell, in time and in eternity, in the world of spirits and in the lower tangible world in which we live and move. The fact that creatures made by God are endowed with the power to will, and, in the case of fallen ones, to will against the God who created them, has no bearing whatsoever upon the supreme and absolute sovereignty which belongs to God as God, and which He has ever exercised in all spheres of existence. We must never imagine that God abandoned His sovereignty when He created angels and men, each of them endowed with the power to will in a limited way. The case is not comparable to that of a man seated in a motor-car, who loses control and thereby meets with a disaster he cannot avoid. God never loses control of His creatures, rebellious though they may prove. He is no mere spectator of events which proceed without Him. He is not comparable to a person who has set going a 'chain of reactions' which proceed contrary to his desires. 'Not a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father's leave' (Matthew 10 : 29).

How then is the fact of sin related to the fact of divine sovereignty? Sin is not of God. It does not originate with God. He permits it; but, though it is abominable to Him and contrary to Him, it does not cause His throne to tremble, or wrench the sceptre of power from His grasp. Sin defies God, but it fights a losing battle. The very fact that God, who knows the end from the beginning, has permitted it, guarantees its complete and final overthrow.

Sin is rebellion, and the arch-rebel is Lucifer, son of the morning (*Isaiah 14 : 12*), who has challenged the right of God to do as He will with His own. In all ways possible to his lofty intelligence and wonderful powers, he has defied the God who made him a pure and upright spirit, though free to fall. In the ultimate outcome he is seen as a defeated foe, consigned to, and only fit for 'the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels' (*Matthew 25 : 41*). As the prince and god of this world—prince by man's sinful submission to his seductions, god by an act of devilish usurpation—he met the Son of God in open combat on the battlefield of earth, and wounded Him in the heel (His humanity) at the moment when, by the Father's will, the Lord from Heaven was 'brought into the dust of death' (*Psalm 22 : 15*). But in the very act he himself received the blow that was fatal to him and his perfidious cause. By an act of omnipotence that operated through the frail human form which was 'crucified through weakness', God's Son bruised the serpent's head (*Genesis 3 : 15*) and destroyed him that had the power of death (*Hebrews 2 : 14*). The sceptre of sovereignty which the devil had wickedly seized was wrested from him by the One who 'thought it not robbery to be equal with God' (*Philippians 2 : 6*), and who had willingly submitted to be found in fashion as a man that He might meet the rebel on the very territory which he claimed for himself (*Luke 4 : 6*) and on which, braggart as he is, he had boasted of his own sovereignty.

The whole question of sovereignty leads inevitably to the crisis of the cross. The drama of resurrection was the public demonstration of the victory achieved by the Son of the Highest, who, 'having spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it' (*Colossians 2 : 15*). It remained for the Son to free the devil's captives, to proclaim the opening of the prison to them that were bound, and to set at liberty the bruised ones (*Luke 4 : 18*); and this work has been proceeding during the long centuries.

All through, divine sovereignty is seen at work. The unlimited power of the Godhead has been engaged in the task. Indeed, the salvation of a sinner through redemption and

regeneration is the most stupendous of all the vast works of God. It demonstrates, as nothing else can do, the almighty power of God, the perfection of His manifold wisdom, the strength of His saving right hand. Creation is a masterpiece of divine power and wisdom, but 'the life and death and resurrection of Jesus are the mightiest activity of the eternal God in time.' In other words, 'God in the Person of His Son has all His mightiest works outdone'.

*(To be continued)*

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## RIGHTEOUSNESS

*(continued from page 12)*

it means that Jesus Christ the Righteous One has come to take the place of unrighteous sinners. I want it to be the response of your conscience, a conscience pricked by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit so that you will say—Yes, I am guilty, utterly guilty and condemned, and I desperately need a Saviour. I want to speak to your hearts this morning that there will be the response of your heart: this going out of your whole being to Christ. I want God so to work this morning that He will move your will and so mould and direct you that you will come freely, constrained by grace, to submit to this Christ.

'Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.'

Jesus Christ is God's righteousness. Here is the standard! Here also is the way opened up by God's grace, by which you and I, guilty, condemned and lost, may yet stand before the Judge and look up into His face and say 'My Father'. Forgiven for Christ's sake; acquitted for Christ's sake; declared righteous for Christ's sake. With His righteousness set to my account, I can sing, 'No condemnation now I dread. Jesus and all in Him is mine'. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus', for in Christ, who is set forth in the gospel, God's 'righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith'.

# The Lord's Prayer

H. P. WOTTON

*'... Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us ...'*

## I. BREAD.

When bread is in short supply other things are often short also. This is true also of the spiritual life, for the gracious fruit of the Spirit depends on our partaking of the basic food of our souls.

Our subject, then, is not physical bread, for 'man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God' (Matthew 4 : 4). Jesus said, 'I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst' (John 6 : 35). The Word of God is bread for our souls, and Jesus said, 'Search the scriptures . . . they are they which testify of Me' (John 5 : 39). In them we find Christ, who is the living Word, and so the living Bread.

Though the Bread is in the Word, a drought will bring about a barren state of things in our souls, for until the living waters of God's Spirit are poured out upon the dry ground, we are not able to partake of the living Bread. Just as the corn will not spring out of the earth if it does not receive the rain and dew from heaven, so the living Bread will not come out of the Word into our souls unless it is enabled to do so by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who breathes upon our souls and upon the Word to make it a vital part of our lives.

Just as there are floods that wash away the harvest of physical bread so that we are not able to partake of it, so there are floods of error and heresy that would deprive us of the Bread of our souls. However, the loving Father who provided the Bread for His children knows how to feed them with it, even in a barren land.

## II. DAILY BREAD.

Yesterday's bread does not feed us today. When God fed the Israelites with manna from heaven, He sent a fresh supply every morning, except on the day preceding the Sabbath, when He sent two days' supply. God does not give us a larder of Bread to last for a week. His mercies are new every morning, to teach us our dependence on Him.

The prayer to our Father to give us Bread honours Him as the one who has undertaken to supply His children's needs. Of

our cares and fears, Jesus has said, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof' (Matthew 6 : 34), and of our supplies of daily bread it is true also that sufficient unto the day is the good thereof.

It is an awful thing when a father is not able to give his children bread. In the early days of his ministry, John Warburton, of Trowbridge, was so poor that he was often in this situation. It broke his heart to hear his children cry, 'Father, give us bread', but they often had to go hungry. It grieves the Father's heart not to see His children hungry for the living Bread, and to see them so indifferent to their daily supply that they do not always ask for it. The reason for their failure so often is that they have been too busy feeding on the fleshpots of Egypt.

It is worth remembering that when we pray to our Father to 'give us this day *our* daily bread', we are not begging for something that does not belong to us, but for that which is ours by right. The Father has made it so, the Son has made it so and the Holy Spirit has made it so. The Father gave the Bread, the Son is the Bread and the Holy Spirit enables us to feed upon it by a living faith; and the more active our faith is, the more lively we will be in this matter. Billy Bray, that happy Cornish believer of the nineteenth century, said that his faith was so active that while others were fumbling for the key, he had opened the cupboard and eaten the loaf.

Lord, increase our faith, and so our Bread.

### III. THE HOUSE OF BREAD.

There is no need for the Father's children to starve when He has provided for them a House of Bread. The name *Bethlehem* means House of Bread. Bread was born at Bethlehem.

The miracle of the five loaves and two fishes proved that Jesus was able to do wonderful things with physical bread, for that which was intended for one boy was increased to feed five thousand men, besides women and children. The Bread that came to the House of Bread has already fed far more than this with the food of their souls.

It is only fit and right that men should labour for the support of their families to supply them with their daily bread. This, however, is not the most important thing, for physical bread has to do only with our physical lives, but spiritual bread has to do with eternal life.

Believing and eating the Bread that was born in the House of Bread is one and the same thing. Jesus said, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. I am that Bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the

wilderness, and are dead. This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever; and the Bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' (John 6 : 47-51).

Bread from the House of Bread is free, yet we do not receive it without effort on our part. But there must be hunger for the Bread of life before we will seek it so earnestly that we find it. God does not encourage us to eat the bread of idleness. 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' (Matthew 7 : 7).

#### IV. FORGIVENESS.

' . . . and forgive us our trespasses . . .' This means that since we last came to the Father we have been guilty of fresh trespasses. If it were not so, there would be no need to come to Him for fresh forgiveness. If we are not aware of the need for this, we may be among those who say they have no sin. 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' (1 John 1 : 8, 9).

When as a family we come to the Father for forgiveness, we are asking for something that each member has a right to. If this were not so, there would be no need to mention the Father's faithfulness and justice in dispensing forgiveness to His children. The Father's right to forgive His children has been purchased for them by the blood of His Son. Everything comes to us through the merits of His one perfect offering on the cross.

Though every member of the Father's family is brought into fellowship with Him by the new birth, we all trespass against the Father because of the old sinful nature that remains with us throughout our pilgrimage. Our lack of gratitude for His continuing mercies, our feeble, fading love for One who loves us with an everlasting love, our faith that is mixed with so much unbelief—what are these things but trespasses against our Father? Therefore we all need to pray ' . . . and forgive us our trespasses . . .'

#### V. WHY COUPLE TOGETHER DAILY BREAD AND FORGIVENESS?

In the biblical statement that 'the ploughing of the wicked is sin' (Proverbs 21 : 4), we have an indication that every other thing the wicked does is sin also. We have not to look far to find that this is so, for in Romans 14 : 23 we read that 'whatso-

ever is not of faith is sin'. The answer, then, to the question is that daily bread and forgiveness are coupled together because our right to them both depends on our faith.

He who does not believe in God does nothing from a principle of faith in Him. And so, just as unbelief makes our ploughing and eating, and indeed everything we do, sinful, so faith in our Father's forgiveness and favour takes away the guilt and taint of sin that is in everything we do.

The Bible speaks of those who 'eat the bread of violence' (Proverbs 4 : 17), but these are not the children of God, who have food superior far. They eat of Christ, who is the Bread of life and the Bread of forgiveness also, for unless by faith we eat of His flesh and drink of His blood, we have no life in us.

So it is a wonderful prayer that couples together daily bread and daily forgiveness, for these are the things upon which the children of God must live and upon which the children of God must enter into the kingdom of their Father. He will not withhold them from us as we travel by the way.

#### VI. THE SUSTENANCE OF THE BREAD OF FORGIVENESS.

People who have insufficient food suffer from weakness and are unfit to carry out the duties of everyday life. The same is true of those who carry a heavy burden. It weighs them down, so that they are not able to concentrate on the things they ought to be thinking about.

Whilst this is true of worldly cares and burdens, it is not true of the burden a man feels when he comes to realise his need of forgiveness, for it is then that he needs to think of the things that concern him more than anything else, those of his eternal destiny. He then hungers for the Bread of forgiveness, for he feels that without it he will perish.

We see this wonderfully portrayed in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. There is Christian with a burden on his back and his face turned away from the City of Destruction. His eyes are turned hopefully towards the Celestial City, but he knows that he will not have the strength to reach it nor the right to enter the city unless he can find some way in which to rid himself of the burden that is upon his back. At last he comes to the cross, where he is relieved of the burden that had deprived him of strength and joy. 'Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing:

(continued on page 21)

# WORLDLINESS

J. C. PHILPOT

'And be not conformed to this world' (Romans 12 : 2).

In proportion as we are conformed to the spirit of this world, our understanding becomes dull in the things of God, our affections cold and torpid, and our consciences less tender and sensitive. There is an eternal opposition between God and the world lying in wickedness. In order, then, that our spiritual experience of the truth of God should maintain its ground, it must not be dulled and deadened by conformity to the world. It is like the sabre that the soldier carries into battle; it must not trail unsheathed upon the ground lest point and edge be dulled; both must be kept keen and sharp, that execution may be done upon the foe. So it is with our enlightened understanding, with our tender conscience, and with our heavenly affections. If we let them fall upon the world, it is like a soldier trailing his sabre upon the pavement; every step he takes dulls both edge and point. If we are conformed to this world, we lose the sweet understanding we had before of the precious truth of God; we lose that tender sensitiveness of conscience, whereby sin, any sin, becomes a grief and a burden to the soul. A Christian should be what was said of an ancient knight: 'without fear and without reproach'. The least suspicion of either would have been a blot on Bayard's scutcheon. So the Christian's shield should be without a stain, his reputation without a blot. His character should not only be free from blemish, but even from suspicion, as untarnished as the modesty of a woman, or the honour and bravery of a man. Now, we often get into this worldly conformity, and run the risk of dulling the sword and sullying the shield, by degrees. We give way in this and in that thing. We are hedged in, it is true, by the precepts of the gospel, the alarms of a tender conscience, and many powerful restraints; so many banks and dykes to keep out the sea of the world; but, as in Holland, if one gap be made in the dyke, the sea at once rushes in, so if one gap be made in the conscience, then the sea of worldliness rushes through the breach, and but for God's grace would soon deluge the soul. But even apart from having any peculiar temptation to make a wide breach like this, our social ties, our daily occupation, the friends and relations whom we love in the flesh, all, through their power over our natural affections, draw us aside from time to time into this worldly conformity. Here, then, is the point where we have to make our chief stand; for if we are conformed to the maxims, the principles,

the customs, and the spirit of the world, we so far lose that spiritual position which is a believer's highest blessing and privilege. We descend from the mount of communion with the Lord, and fall into a cold, miserable spot, where the life of God, though not extinct, is reduced to its lowest ebb.

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## THE LORD'S PRAYER

(continued from page 19)

'Thus far did I come laden with my sin,  
Nor could ought ease the grief that I was in,  
Till I came hither. What a place is this!  
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?  
Must here the burden fall from off my back?  
Must here the strings that bound it to me crack?  
Blest cross! Blest sepulchre! Blest rather be  
The Man that there was put to shame for me!'

There is great strength in the knowledge of sins forgiven.

### VII. . . . AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US . . . '

It seems almost as if the Lord Jesus is asking us to lay before the Father an example of our forgiveness of others to encourage Him to forgive us. But this cannot be, for God's forgiveness is never purchased by any contribution of ours. We need, however, to remember that there are degrees of grace. There is great grace and little grace. Great grace is doubtless able to perform the duty, while little grace is able only to desire to do so. To will is present with it, but how to perform, it knows not.

The children of darkness have no such desires as this. Rather than forgive, they take pleasure in revenge. The child of God, however, desires to forgive even when he feels his forgiving is imperfect, and the Father accepts the desire for the act, or we could not pray 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us . . . '

There is the comforting thought that Christ has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. To forgive our neighbour is a part of our duty to love our neighbour as ourselves. This is a part of the perfect law of God that we have not kept but which Christ, as our covenant Head, has kept for us and in our place, just as if we had kept it ourselves; and so, clothed by faith in His perfect righteousness, we may confidently say, 'forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us'.

# Doctrinal Definitions

PAUL TUCKER

## BELIEVERS AND PRAYER THE PERILS OF A PRAYING LIFE

We all agree that prayer is an obligation laid upon us as believers. 'Men ought always to pray.' We would all recognise that prayer is a privilege. But do we all equally acknowledge that privilege brings responsibility? It is possible for a Christian to pray lightly, ill-advisedly and without a due regard to the consequences, should God answer the prayer that has been offered. I want to look at some of these perils concerning prayer.

### I. THE PERIL THAT ARISES FROM A DUAL PRESSURE UPON THE BELIEVER.

1. *The gracious pressure and constraint of the Holy Spirit.* The entire disposition of his life should be under the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit. (a) Prayer is not the exercise of our human activity on its own. When we pray it is the Holy Spirit Who prompts us, constrains us and urges us. Romans 8 : 26. The help that the Holy Spirit gives to us is an inward help (verse 27). The Spirit of God gives meaning and reality to our praying and brings us right into the presence of God Who searches our hearts, desires, and motives.

(b) The Spirit helps us to persevere, to continue in prayer. Ephesians 6 : 18. If prayer were just a human activity, then it would be very fitful and irregular.

(c) Another reference to the Spirit's pressure upon the believer is in Jude 20.

2. *The pressure of the flesh.* The believer has an old nature which remains with him and which he carries with him to the grave. See Galatians 5 : 17. The flesh would prevent us from praying, and even if we do pray, would mislead us into praying in the wrong way and for the wrong things. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself recognised the limitations of the flesh. See Matthew 26 : 41. Note the contrast. Our Lord here was speaking primarily of the physical body when He said, 'the flesh is weak'. These men were weary physically. One of the perils in prayer is that the flesh can over-influence the spirit so that the spirit is overcome. In considering this whole doctrine of prayer we must ever remember that the believer is not an ordinary person. He is a new man in Christ and therefore has two natures. The old nature has to be reckoned dead, but the

trouble is that though the flesh may be reckoned dead to sin, sin is not dead to the flesh. It is always active, persistent, pressing. On the one hand the Spirit of God would call us aside to pray; on the other side the flesh would tell us we have not time, or we are tired, or too weary, or later on will be a better occasion.

## II. THE PERILS OF SATANIC ATTACK.

I believe that when our Lord Jesus Christ was in the Garden of Gethsemane the powers of darkness were mustering their forces and concentrating themselves upon the Son of God. I am sure that some of the darkness that wrapped itself about the soul of the Son of God in the Garden extended to those disciples and they themselves were somewhat enveloped in it. The devil hates prayer. The devil is a great believer in prayer. He does not practise prayer, but he suffers from the effects of prayer. He knows that prayer deals a death-blow at his kingdom. 'Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.' It may not be true, if that weak saint is out of touch with the Lord, but it may well be true if that weak saint is really to the Lord in vital communion.

An angelic being appeared to Daniel who had been praying for three weeks and fasting to a certain extent. Daniel 10 : 12, 13. Daniel prayed, but there were forces in the unseen realm contesting his prayer and seemingly hindering the answer to it for three weeks. Surely that is why the Lord Jesus puts it like this, in the Garden when rebuking Peter and the rest—'Peter, could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation'. There is this relation of watching and praying. See also Ephesians 6 : 18. 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and *watching* thereunto.'

1. *We ought to watch first of all before we pray.* It is quite obvious that the devil is going to do his utmost to keep us from prayer. It does seem that there are occasions when the devil can manipulate circumstances, before you turn to prayer, in order to stop you from praying. If we are really going to come into the presence of God, we need first of all a quiet mind. If the devil can so arrange circumstances as to rob us of our peace of mind, then he knows that when we begin to pray our thoughts will wander off to the thing that is preoccupying us and we shall be disabled. We need not only a quiet mind, but a right spirit. You cannot pray if your spirit is out of harmony with the Spirit of God. If the devil can so work things as to get us ruffled or irritable with someone else, to put us in the wrong frame of mind altogether, then he knows he will rob our prayers of any spiritual effectiveness.

*2. We need to watch while we pray.*

(a) *Physical weariness is something that is very real.* In Romans 8 : 11, I think that Paul is referring to this physical body. It is a mortal body, subject to death. He is not there speaking of the incorruptible body. The ministry of the Holy Spirit can quicken the mortal body, but if the devil can keep it weary, I am quite sure he will do his best to prevent us from praying.

(b) *An undisciplined mind can keep us from prayer.* How the devil loves to lead us away from the real burden of our prayer to lesser and secondary things. How we need every thought to be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

(c) *The devil will play upon us by suggesting that self should obtrude.* This is the peril of being taken up with ourselves in prayer rather than with the Lord Jesus Christ. Self-adulation is something that follows us even into the very presence of God. It sometimes produces this result that even when we try to persuade ourselves that we are worshipping God, we are actually worshipping ourselves and doing nothing more. Man is never greater than when he is in communion and contact with God, but even at that point sin is with us and assailing us. Indeed, it is only there that we really begin to understand sin.

(d) *Prejudice comes into this very strongly.* Perhaps there is someone I do not like very much. I never pray for him. Yet he is a child of God. I am not really in deep fellowship with him and so I exclude him from my prayer. How often our prejudices control our prayer life. See Genesis 18 : 23-33 and 19 : 18-20. When Abraham prayed he left himself out of it altogether. But Lot, when he came to pray, did not pray for anyone or anything except himself.

*3. We need to watch after we have prayed.* We must expect God to answer prayer. See Habakkuk 2 : 1. He was on the look-out after he had prayed.

### III. THE PERIL OF A WRONG MOTIVE.

1. *That was the trouble with the Israelites.* See Psalm 106 : 15. 'And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.' The reference is to Numbers 11. The striking thing here is that they did not formally pray to God, but that was the prayer that went up from their hearts. In verse 18 Moses said, 'Ye have wept in the ears of the Lord'. A man may pray very spiritually in the prayer meeting or in a service, and yet deep down in his heart he may have very carnal desires, ambitions that are unsanctified, longings that are unspiritual. The real prayer God hears is the prayer that has the energy of the whole life behind it, what the man is really desiring, deep down in the recesses of the soul. There is not a single Christian who

would say, 'O God, I wish I had never been redeemed by the blood, I wish I was back in the bondage of the world'. Yet each of us, as children of God, can cherish in our heart carnal desires that belong to the world. Those desires are the real prayer. God worked a miracle to answer the Israelites' prayer. Most probably they had a great thanksgiving service. Even while the flesh was between their teeth they were smitten with a plague, and many of them perished and they were buried there on that site, in a communal grave known as the grave of lustings. If a man asks God for bread, God will never give him a stone. If he asks for an egg, God will never give him a scorpion; but if a man asks God for a stone, and keeps asking God for a stone, God might give him one in order to break his teeth upon it.

2. *There is another great illustration in the Old Testament when Israel wanted a king like the other nations.* They were tired of theocratic government and they pleaded for a king. They were given Saul, and we all know the tragic mess he made of his reign. They had their request, but it brought leanings into their soul.

3. *The New Testament illustration is the Prodigal Son.* He prayed in the beginning 'Father, give me', but when he had learned his lesson, he came home and said 'Father, make me'.

#### IV. THE PERIL OF UN-IMPLEMENTED PRAYER.

That is, prayer that is substituted for action, and activity. There are two illustrations of this. 1, *The first is at the Red Sea*, in Exodus 14 : 15. The Egyptians were pursuing Israel. This was not the time for prayer, it was the time for action. 'Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.' 2, *The other great illustration in the Old Testament is in Joshua 7:10.* 'And the Lord said unto Joshua, get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned.' 'You have prayed long enough,' says God. 'You have been on your face from morning until evening, now it is time to work.' This is a very real peril in prayer. It is the peril of praying and then leaving it there, not prepared to do anything about the praying. Now, someone has said this: 'Service without prayer is presumption; prayer without readiness to serve is hypocrisy; but service bathed in prayer is the pathway to power'. When you and I pray we must be prepared for God to challenge us to do something about answering our own prayers. Moses prayed, but part of the answer was in his own hands. 'Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward. Touch the water with the rod.' Joshua prayed, but part of the answer was in his own hands. 'Get up and go to the camp and identify the transgressor.'

# God's Law in Man's Heart

C. H. SPURGEON

*A sermon preached on Sunday evening, June 28,  
1885, in the Metropolitan Tabernacle.*

'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.' (Hebrews 8 : 10).

When God gave to Israel His law—the law of the first covenant—it was such a holy law that it ought to have been kept by the people. It was a just and righteous law, concerning which God said, 'Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord.' The law of the ten commandments is strictly just; it is such a law as a man might make for himself if he studied his own best interests, and had wisdom enough to frame it aright. It is a perfect law, in which the interests of God and man are both studied; it is not a partial law, but impartial, complete, and covering all the circumstances of life. You could not take away one command out of the ten without spoiling both tables of the law, and you could not add another command without being guilty of making a superfluity. The law is holy, and just, and good; it is like the God who made it, it is a perfect law. Then, surely, it ought to have been kept. When men revolt against unjust laws, they are to be commended; but when a law is admitted to be perfect, then disobedience to it is an act of exceeding guilt.

Further, God not only gave a law which ought to have been kept because of its own intrinsic excellence, but He also gave it in a very wonderful way, which ought to have ensured its observance by the people. The Lord came down upon Mount Sinai in fire, and the mountain was altogether on a smoke, and the smoke thereof ascended 'as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly'; and the sight that was then seen on Sinai, and the sounds that were there heard, and all the pomp and awful grandeur were so terrible that even Moses—that boldest, calmest, quietest of men—said, 'I do exceedingly fear and quake'. The children of Israel, as they heard that law proclaimed, were so amazed and overwhelmed with God's display of His majesty and might, that they were ready

enough to promise to keep His commandments. The law of God could not have been made known to mankind in grander or more sublime style than was displayed in the giving of that covenant on Mount Sinai.

And, dear friends, after the giving of the law, did not God affix to it those terrible penalties which should have prevented men from disobeying His commands? 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' It was the capital sentence that was to be pronounced upon the disobedient; there could be no heavier punishment than that. God had, as it were, drawn His sword against sin; and if man had been a reasonable being, he ought at once to have started back from committing an act which he might be sure would make God his foe.

Moreover, the blessings that were appended to the keeping of the law ought to have induced men to keep it; look again at those words I quoted just now: 'Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord.' This did not mean that the man who kept God's law should merely exist; there are some in these degenerate days who seek to make out life to be existence, and death to be annihilation, but there is little likeness between the words, or between what those words mean. 'He shall live in them,' said the Lord concerning the man who kept His law; and there is a fulness of blessedness couched in that word 'live'. If men had kept the covenant of the Lord—if Adam, for instance, had kept it in the garden of Eden, the rose would have been without a thorn to tear his flesh, and the enjoyment of life would never have been marred by the bitterness of toil or grief.

But, alas! notwithstanding all these solemn sanctions of the ancient covenant, men did not keep it. The promise, 'This do, and thou shalt live', never produced any doing that was worthy to be rewarded with life; and the threatening, 'Do this, and thou shalt die', never kept any man back from daringly venturing into the wrong road which leadeth unto death. The fact is, that the covenant of works, if it be looked upon as a way of safety, is a total failure. No man ever persevered in it unto the end, and no man ever attained unto life by keeping it. Nor can we, now that we are fallen, ever hope to be better than our unfallen covenant-head. Adam: nor may we, who are already lost and condemned by our sinful works, dream for a moment that we shall be able to save ourselves by our works. You see, dear friends, the first covenant was in these terms—'You do right, and God will reward you for it. If you deserve life, God will give it to you'. Now, as you all know right well, that covenant was broken all to pieces; it was unable to stand by reason of the weakness of our flesh and the corruptness of our

nature. So God set aside that first covenant, He put it away as an outworn and useless thing; and He brought in a new covenant—the covenant of grace; and in our text we see what is the tenor of it: ‘I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts’. This is one of the most glorious promises that ever fell from the lips of infinite love. God said not, ‘I will come again, as I came on Sinai, and thunder at them’. No, but, ‘I will come in gentleness and mercy, and find a way into their hearts’. He said not, ‘I will take two great tables of stone, and with my finger write out my law before their eyes’. No, but, ‘I will put my finger upon their hearts, and there will I write my law’. He said not, ‘I will give promises and threatenings that shall be the safeguard of this new covenant’; but ‘I will with my Spirit graciously operate upon their minds and their hearts, and so I will sweetly influence them to serve me—not for reward, nor from any servile motive, but because they know me, and they love me, and they feel it to be their delight to walk in the way of my commandments’. O dear sirs, may you all be sharers in the blessings of that new covenant! May God say this of you, and do this to you; and if so, we shall meet in the glory-land, to sing unto the grace of that eternal God who has wrought so wondrously with us, and in us, and for us!

Coming directly to the text, I shall, first of all, speak upon *the meaning of this blessing*; secondly, upon *the means whereby God bestows this blessing upon us*, trying to show you with what pencil the Lord writes upon the human heart; and, thirdly, I shall dwell for a few minutes upon *the exceeding grace of this blessing*.

I. First, then, I am to speak upon THE MEANING OF THIS BLESSING: ‘I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.’

It means, first, that when God comes to deal with His own chosen people, really to save them, *He makes them to know His law*. The law still stands in the Old Testament, and our blessed Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, has condensed it into one word, ‘Love’; and then He has expanded it throughout the whole of His earthly life to show us how it ought to be kept. So we sing—

‘My dear Redeemer and my Lord,  
I read my duty in Thy Word.  
But in Thy life the law appears  
Drawn out in living characters.’

But, although we can read that law in the Scriptures, and see it wrought out in the life of Christ, yet it is needful that the Spirit of God should come and enlighten us with regard to it, if we are really to know what it is. Otherwise, a man may hear the ten commandments read every Sabbath day, and go on break-

ing them without ever knowing that he is breaking them; he may be keeping the letter of the commandments, and yet all the while be violating their spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes to us, He shows us what the law really is. Take, for instance, the command, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery'. 'Well!' says one, 'I have not broken that commandment'. 'Stay,' says the Spirit of God, 'till you know the spiritual meaning of that command, for whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart'. There is, also, the command, 'Thou shalt not kill'. 'Oh!' says the man, 'I never killed anybody, I have not committed murder'. 'But,' says the Spirit of God, 'whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer'. When the Lord thus writes His law upon our heart, He makes us to know the far-reaching power and scope of the commandment. He causes us to understand that it touches not only actions and words, but thoughts, ay, and the most transient imaginations, the things that are scarcely born within us, the sights that pass in a moment across the mind, like a stray passenger who passes in front of the camera when a photographer is taking a view. The Spirit of God teaches us that even these momentary impressions are sinful, and that the very thought of foolishness is sin.

Did you, dear friend, ever have this truth truly written on your heart? If so, I will tell you how you felt; you abhorred yourself, and you said, 'Who can stand before this terrible law? Who can ever hope to keep these commandments?' You looked to the flames that Moses saw on Sinai, and you shrank and trembled almost unto despair, and you entreated that these terrible words should not be spoken to you any more. Yet was it good for you thus to be made to know the law—not in the letter of it only, but in its cutting, crushing, killing spirit—for it worketh death to self-righteousness and death to all carnal boastings. When the law comes, sin revives, and we die; that is all that can come of it by itself. Yet is it necessary that there should be such a death as that, and that there should be such a revival of sin that we may know the truth about it, and under the force of that truth may be driven to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is 'the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth'. So, then, writing the law in our hearts means, first, making us know what the law really is.

If that is done, the Lord is pleased, next, to cause His people *to remember that law*. When a thing is 'learnt by heart', you know the common meaning of that expression, even amongst our children. If they have learnt a thing by heart, rather than merely by rote, they have made it their own, and it remains with them. A man with whom God the Holy Spirit deals is one

who does not have to go to the 20th of Exodus to know what the law is; he does not need to stop and ask concerning most things, 'Is this right?' or 'Is this wrong?' but he carries within him a balance and a scale, a standard and test by which he can try these things for himself. He has the law of his God written upon his heart, so that, almost as soon as he looks at a thing, he begins to perceive whether there is evil in it, or whether it is good. There is a sort of sensitiveness in his soul which makes him discern between good and evil. When God the Holy Spirit is dealing with him, there is a true, enlightened conscience within him, so that he no longer puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, or darkness for light and light for darkness; but something within him tells him 'This is right', or 'That is wrong'. It is a most blessed thing when this is the case, and it is always the work of the Spirit of God.

I know that there is some sort of a conscience in most men; I am afraid it is a very small rushlight in some, and that it is almost blown out by their evil habits. They can even make themselves think that they are doing right, when they are as wrong as wrong can be; but in a child of God there is a burning and a shining light which reveals the truth concerning sin. There is within him a something that cannot be silenced; this is that principle or power which John Bunyan calls in his *Holy War*, 'Mr. Conscience, the Recorder of Mansoul'. You know that, when the city of Mansoul rebelled against the great King Shaddai, and came under the sway of Diabolus, they shut Mr. Recorder Conscience up in a dark room, for they did not want to let him see what was being done. Yet, notwithstanding, when the old gentleman had his fits, he used to sorely trouble the inhabitants of the guilty town, so they kept him under lock and key as much as possible. But when Mr. Recorder Conscience gets full liberty, and lifts his brow into the sunlight, ah! sirs, then are we guided in a very different way from that of ungodly men who follow their own evil course. Then does the Lord say, 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts'. The law is there to censure or to cheer; it is there to let us hear its voice say, 'This is the way, walk ye in it'; or it is there to say, 'Stay where you are, go no farther'; or 'Return, thou backsliding daughter, and seek mercy of the Lord'.

God does more than that for His people. When He writes His law in our heart, He makes us to approve it. An ungodly man wishes to alter God's law. 'There,' says he, 'I do not like that command "Thou shalt not steal", I should like to be a little bit of a trickster'. Another says, 'I do not like that purity of which the minister spoke just now, I should like to indulge

myself a little. Am I to have no pleasure?' But when the law of the Lord is written in his heart, the man says, 'The law is right'. He would not alter it if he could; there is nothing that he hates more than the lowering of the tone of the law, for he does not want a lax morality. 'Oh, no!' says he, 'let us have the highest form of righteousness that can be, and may God help me to live up to it!' Paul says, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man'; and so is it with every true child of God, he cannot think of the holiness of God without at once saying, 'I would not have Him other than He is; let Him be holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, for as such I can worship Him; but if He were less than that, I could not esteem Him'. If he hears of God's justice, he delights even in that stern attribute, for he would not have an unjust God. It is a great thing when God leads a man to approve of all that is right; I do not mean merely to acknowledge that it is right, but to be glad that it is so, and to wish that in his own soul he were conformed to it.

There is a further writing of the law in the heart when the man of God is made *to appropriate that law*—not only to approve of it, but to approve of it for himself. There are many people who approve of laws as far as they keep their fellow-men in check, but they do not want laws for themselves. 'Oh!' says such a person, 'of course, everybody ought to be honest; my servants ought not to rob me, they ought to give me a good day's work for their wage.' When the argument is turned round, and the question is about giving a good day's wage for the work, then they talk about political economy, which means that it is absolutely necessary that men should be dishonest. That is the pith and marrow of that political science, that every man will be selfish, and that there is no hope that people will be otherwise. A man speaks that which is not true, and sees no evil in it; but if another should say anything against his character, that is a very different matter, it is quite unpardonable. He may walk through the earth, and devour men's characters as much as he pleases; that, of course, is mere criticism, such as we ought all to expect: but if he is touched, and there is a word spoken against him, it is cruel and unkind, and ought to be put down at once. When God writes the law in a man's heart, he takes the law more to himself than he applies it to anybody else, and his cry is not, 'See how my neighbours sin', but, 'See how I sin'; his clamour is not against his brother's fault, but against his own fault. No longer does he look out for motes in other men's eyes, but he is most concerned about the beam which he is quite sure is in his own eye, and he prays the Lord to remove it.

But, brethren, the law is not fully written in the heart till a man, approving the law and appropriating it to himself, feels *he delights to obey it*. 'There,' says he, 'O my God, my highest happiness lies in doing as Thou wouldest have me to do. I do not want any excuse or indulgence for sin; I want, above everything else, to be holy. It shall be my greatest pleasure to be pure, it shall be my perfect bliss to be perfectly holy. Thou hast so written Thy law in my heart that, every time my heart beats, it seems to beat for holiness. All the inclinations of my new-born nature are towards right, towards truth, towards goodness, towards God.' This, dear friends, is to have the law of the Lord written in your heart so as to delight in it after the inward man, and to delight to practise it with the outward man, daily striving to make the entire life to be in accordance with the dictates of God's will. O brothers, is it not a wonderful thing that God shall ever make it as natural for us to be holy as once it was natural for us to be unholy, and that then we shall find it as much a joy to serve Him as once we thought it a pleasure not to serve Him, when, indeed, to deny ourselves shall cease to be self-denial? It shall be enjoyment to us to be nothing, it shall be delight to renounce everything of self, and to cling close to God, and to walk in His ways. Then will be fulfilled in our experience the promise of our text, 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts'.

There is an old Latin proverb which says that 'things that are written remain'; and I quote that proverb here believing that it is intended in the text to teach us that, when God's law is written in our hearts, it is retained there. The lawyer always says, 'You had better be careful what you say, but when you go to law, never write anything, hold back from the use of pen and ink, for that which is written remains'. When God writes His law in our hearts, He writes that which will never be blotted out. Once let Him take the pen in His hand, and begin to write, 'Holiness unto the Lord', right across a man's heart, and the devil himself can never remove that sacred line. So it is meant, in our text, as a part of the covenant, that God will write 'holiness' so deeply upon the nature of His chosen people that they may sooner cease to be than cease to be holy. He will so put His law right into their hearts that you must tear their hearts out before you can tear out their conformity to the mind of God. Is not this a wonderful method of writing the law in the heart? This is sanctification indeed. May God work it in each one of you! and He will if you are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; for if you trust in Christ, you are in the covenant, and being in the covenant, this is the promise concerning you, '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'.

Thus have I spoken upon the meaning of this blessing.

II. Now, for a few minutes, I am going to speak upon THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS BLESSING IS GIVEN—the pens that God uses when He writes upon human hearts—for I want you to notice this interesting process.

First, God writes His law upon His people's hearts with *the pen of gratitude*. He tells them that Jesus Christ loves them, and gave Himself for them. He gives them a sight of the bleeding Saviour, and tells them that their sin is put away by His death. Then, in return, they love the Lord with all their heart and mind, and soul, and strength. The best way to make a man keep a law is to make him love the law-giver. We thought at one time that God was a cruel tyrant, but we have learned that He is our loving Father. We could not have thought that He would have given His only-begotten Son to die as the Substitute for us; but now that He has done so, we love Him with all our heart. There is one way of writing the law of God in our heart by giving us gratitude as the motive of a new life. The natural man's only motive for being good is, 'If I am good, I shall go to heaven; and if I am bad, I shall go to hell'. That is the slave's motive; but the child of God is no more a slave, he has been delivered from his former bondage. He says, 'I am saved by sovereign grace, therefore I shall go to heaven. I shall never go to hell, that cannot be. I am God's chosen one, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and—

‘Now for the love I bear His name,  
What was my gain I count my loss;  
My former pride I call my shame,  
And nail my glory to His cross’.”

‘Chosen, not for any goodness of my own, but entirely of the free and sovereign grace of God; tell me now what I can do to show my gratitude to such a gracious God.’ That is one way in which the law of the Lord gets written in the hearts of His people.

Again, the law is written in the heart by *repentance working hatred of sin*. Burnt children, you know, are afraid of the fire. Oh, what a horror I have had of sin ever since the day when I felt its power over my soul! It was enough to drive me mad when I felt the guilt of sin; it would have done so, I sometimes think, if I had continued much longer in that terrible condition. O sin, sin, I have had enough of thee! Thou didst never bring me more than a moment's seeming joy, and with it there came a deep and awful bitterness which burns within me to

this day! And now, being set free from sin, can I go back to it? Some of you, my brethren and sisters, came to Christ with such difficulty that you were saved, as it were, by the skin of your teeth. You were like Jonah, you had to come up from the bottom of the mountains, and out of the very belly of hell you cried unto God. Well, that experience has made sin so bitter to you that you will not go back to it. The law has been written in your heart with the steel pen of repentance, and God has made sin to be a horrible evil to you.

Farther than that, and deeper than that, God also writes His law upon the heart in *regeneration*, wherein He creates in man a new and better life. In regeneration, if I understand it at all, there is born in us a new nature. Our old nature is all sin, and it will never be anything else but sin. You may doctor it as you will, but it is a body of sin and death, and it will always remain so; but the new nature, which is born in us at our new birth, cannot sin, because it is born of God. It is a living and incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever; and that new heart, that right spirit, from its very birth, from its very origin, from its very nature, has the law and will of God engraved upon it. To the new nature, it is as natural to obey as to the old nature it is natural to disobey. To the new nature, it is as much its element to live in holiness as to the old nature it is its element to live in sin. Thus, by regeneration, the law of the Lord is written in the heart of His people.

Again, God writes His law the more fully in the heart of His people as they increase in knowledge. The more we know of God, of this life, of the life to come, of heaven and hell, of the Person of Christ, of the atonement, and of every other subject that is taught us in the Scriptures, the more we see the evil of sin, and the more we see the delights of holiness. Why, at the very first moment of his conversion, man is afraid of sin because of what he has seen of it; but as he begins to perceive how sin put the Christ to death, how sin digged the pit of hell, how sin brought all the plagues and curses upon the human family, and will continue to curse generations yet unborn, then the man says, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Trained and educated in the school of Christ, the more he knows, the more he delights in the law and the will of God.

And farther than this, dear friends, the law is written in the heart, as God makes the new life in us to grow and increase. Some Christians, I am sorry to say, have but little spiritual life. I spoke yesterday with a man of God who has been preaching the gospel in the New Hebrides, where till lately the people

were cannibals; and, by God's grace, he has brought hundreds, if not thousands, of the former savages to become Christians; and the good brother, when he spoke of his hardships, said, 'Ah, but you do not know in England the joys of those who preach to cannibals!' True, most of the missionaries who first went out were killed and eaten, and our friend escaped by the skin of his teeth; I looked at him again to hear what his special and peculiar joys were. 'Oh!' he said, 'the joy of converting a cannibal to Christ is a greater bliss than can be known by you, who only bring ordinary people to the Saviour; and,' he added, 'I tell you that there are no Christians that I know of that excel my converted cannibals. If you want to see the Sabbath day sacredly kept, you must come into my place, and see how these people who used to be cannibals kept it. Those who were accustomed to eat their fellow-men, now never rise without prayer, and never sit at the table without asking a blessing. There is not a Christian household but has family prayer in it, morning and evening. Those people walk with God,' said the missionary, 'and live close to Christ; and as I look at them, it seems such a joy to have been the means of bringing these cannibals to Christ.' I am afraid there are many nominally Christian people who are not half as good as those converted cannibals. What is the reason? It is because they seem to have God's life poured into them abundantly, and some among us have but little of it. Now, when a man gets the life of God abundantly poured into him, he is sensitive against sin, for he has the law of God written in his heart, and thereby God has made his conscience—

‘Quick as the apple of an eye’.

He cannot bear to hear an ill word from others, or himself have an evil thought without being grieved and troubled. I have seen men who have professed to be Christians do many questionable things, and yet never feel that they were doing any wrong; but as for the true Christian, who lives near to God, and who has been acting perfectly right as far as other people could judge, when he gets home, he begins blaming himself for something he did not do. As far as you can see, he has said and done the right thing; but he says, 'No, I did not say it as earnestly as I ought to have said it; I did not do it as I ought to have done it'. As for myself, I know that, when I live nearest to God, I am most conscious of sin; and I believe that, in proportion as you get away from God, you will begin to think that you are perfect; but if you live in the light of the Lord, sin will be a daily plague to you, and you will be crying for the precious blood to wash you, and make you clean. It is

the man who is spiritually blind who talks about his holiness, but it is the one whose eyes have been opened of God, the really holy man whom God has brought near to Himself, who still cries out, 'Holier! Holier! Higher'.

'Nearer, my God, to Thee,  
    Nearer to Thee!  
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me.  
Still all my song shall be,  
    Nearer, my God, to Thee!  
    Nearer to Thee!'

And this is how God writes His law in His people's hearts, by giving them so much light that they become tender and sensitive at the very approach of sin.

And, once more, *communing with Christ* is the best way of getting the law written in the heart. He who is with Christ from morning to noon, and from noon to dewy eve, and who can say at night—

'Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,  
    I lay me down to rest,  
As in the embraces of my God,  
    Or on my Saviour's breast'—

He is the man who will have the law of God written in his heart. How can he sin whose garments smell of the myrrh and aloes and cassia of communion with Christ? How can he come out of the ivory palaces of fellowship with his Lord, and then go and live as others do, and sin against his God?

Thus, you see, dear friends, how it is that the Lord writes His law in the hearts of His people.

III. I have but a minute or two in which to speak upon THE GREAT GRACE WHICH IS CONTAINED IN THIS BLESSING. I do not know a greater gift than this that even God can bestow—save the gift of His only-begotten Son: 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts'.

O you poor sinners, I may exhort you to keep the law; but, without the Spirit of God working within you, nothing will come of it! But if God puts His law into your hearts, then you will keep it. Oh, that He might even now lead you to His dear Son, that you might see His law in the hand of Christ, and then feel that pierced hand dropping it into your heart to abide there for ever!

The great grace of this blessing lies here. First, *God does what man would not and could not do*. Man would not keep the law, he refused to obey it; so God comes, in the splendour of His grace, and changes his will, renews his heart, alters his affections, so that, what man would not do, God does. Man has also become so fallen that he cannot keep the law. Sooner

might the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, than he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well; but what man cannot do, by reason of the perversity of the flesh, God performs within him, working in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. Oh, what amazing grace is this, which while it forgives our want of will, also removes our want of power!

And, dear friends, is it not a wonderful proof of grace that *God does this without destroying man in any degree whatever?* Man is a creature with a will—a ‘free will’ as they sometimes call it—a creature who is responsible for his actions; so God does not come and change our hearts by a physical process, as some seem to dream, but by a spiritual process in which He never mars our nature, but sets our nature right. If a man becomes a child of God, he still has a will. God does not destroy the delicate machinery of our nature, but He puts it into proper gear. We become Christians with our own full assent and consent; and we keep the law of God not by any compulsion except the sweet compulsion of love. We do not keep it because we cannot do otherwise, but we keep it because we would not do otherwise, because we have come to delight therein, and this seems to me the greatest wonder of divine grace.

See, dear friends, how different is the Lord’s way of working and ours. If you knock down a man who is living an evil life, and put him in chains, you can make him honest by force; or if you set him free, and hem him round with Acts of Parliament, you may make him sober if he cannot get anything to drink, you may make him wonderfully quiet if you put a gag in his mouth; but that is not God’s way of acting. He who put man in the Garden of Eden, and never put any palisades around the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but left man a free agent, does just the same in the operations of His grace. He leaves His people to the influences that are within them, and yet they go right, because they are so changed and renewed by His grace that they delight to do that which once they loathed to do. I admire the grace of God in acting thus. We should have taken the watch to pieces, and broken half the wheels, and made new ones, or something of the kind. But God knows how to leave the man just as much a man as he was before his conversion, and yet to make him so entirely a new man that old things have passed away, and all things have become new.

And this is very beautiful, too, that when God writes His law in His people’s hearts, *He makes this the way of their preservation.* When God’s law is written in a man’s heart, that heart becomes divinely royal property, for the King’s name is

there, and the heart in which God has written His name can never perish. Some years ago, my esteemed brother, Mr. John B. Gough, out of his great love for me, sent me a very valuable walking-stick. It must have cost him a large sum of money, for it was made of ebony, and it had a gold head to it, with pieces of Californian quartz curiously worked into the head of the stick. I cannot say that it was of much practical use to me, but still I valued it as a present from Mr. Gough. One night, a thief got into my house, and stole my walking-stick, and the man, of course, broke up the stick, and took off the gold from the head. He brought it down to a pawnbroker's not far from here; he had hammered and battered it as much as he could; but when the pawnbroker looked carefully at it, he saw the letters, 'S-p-u-r-g-e-o-n'. 'Oh!' said he to the man, 'you stop a bit', which, of course, was just what the thief did not do. I got my gold back again because my name was in it; though the man hammered it, there was my name, and the gold was bound to come back to me, and so it did. Now, when the Lord once writes His name in your heart, He writes His law within you; and though the devil may batter you, God will claim you as His own. Temptation and sin may assail you, but if the law of the Lord is in your heart, you shall not give way to sin, you shall resist it, you shall be preserved, you shall be kept, for you are the Lord's.

This is the only way of salvation that I know of for any of you. First, you must be washed in the fountain filled with blood; and next, you must have the law of God written in your inward parts. Then shall you be safe beyond fear of ruin. 'They shall be mine,' saith the Lord of hosts, 'in that day when I make up my jewels.' Oh, blessed plan of salvation! May it be accepted by every man and woman here! And it can only be so by the work of the Spirit of God leading you to a simple trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust Christ to save you, and He will do it, as surely as He is the Christ of God. God help you to trust Him now! Amen.

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*Because we do not know who belongs or does not belong to the number of the predestinated, it becomes us to desire the salvation of all. Thus whoever we meet we shall endeavour to make him a partaker of peace. But our peace shall rest upon the sons of peace.—JOHN CALVIN.*

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*Shall we be as angels hereafter? Let us live angelically now.*  
—THOMAS GOODWIN.

# *Co-operation in Evangelism?*

JOHN MURRAY

The question with which we are concerned in this article is whether evangelicals may properly co-operate with modernists in the actual conduct of evangelism. When we say 'properly', we mean whether it is in accord with the revealed will of God as set forth for us in Holy Scripture. It is a question that is seriously debated by both evangelicals and modernists, though the criteria by which modernists seek to determine the question are admittedly different from those of the evangelicals.

For the latter, by and large at least, the question is focused in the relevance of certain biblical injunctions such as 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness' (Ephesians 5 : 11), 'be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers' (2 Corinthians 6 : 14), and 'if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed' (2 John 10). Obviously, if this kind of co-operation falls within the scope of such prohibitions, then *for the evangelical* this should be an end of all debate. Within the evangelical camp it is precisely this question that has been ardently debated back and forth.

#### THE EVANGELICAL'S BELIEF.

An evangelical is committed to certain well-defined positions regarding the Christian faith. He is a trinitarian and believes that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He says without equivocation that there is one God, that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and that these three are distinct persons, as B. B. Warfield so simply stated the doctrine.

The evangelical also believes that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the infallible Word of God written, inerrantly inspired of the Holy Spirit, the only infallible rule of faith and life. This latter belief is becoming increasingly the distinguishing mark of the evangelical as over against modernism, not because this belief of itself makes one an evangelical but because, in terms of our present-day situation, a person begins to move away from his evangelical moorings whenever he is ready to abandon this position and because it is at this point that the attack on evangelical belief is most sharply drawn.

The evangelical believes that the eternal Son of God became man by being supernaturally begotten by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary and was born of her without human fatherhood. The Son of God came into this world by this means in order to save men from sin and for this reason He shed His blood upon the accursed tree as a substitutionary sacrifice. He rose from the dead on the third day in that body that had been crucified and laid in the tomb of Joseph. After forty days He ascended up to heaven and was highly exalted, reigns from heaven as Head over all things until He will have subdued all enemies, and will return again personally, visibly, and gloriously to judge living and dead.

The evangelical believes that all men are lost and dead in sin, that there is salvation in none other name but that of Jesus, and that apart from regeneration by the Holy Spirit and faith in Christ Jesus men are irretrievably lost. He believes in heaven and hell as places of eternal bliss and eternal woe respectively and that these are the two final abodes of mankind. Evangelism, therefore, for the evangelical, is the proclamation of the gospel of Christ to lost men in order that they may be saved. He must proclaim this gospel with the urgency which the gravity of the issues of life and death demand. Evangelism is supported by the fact that Christ is offered freely to all without distinction and that God commands men that they should all everywhere repent.

This summary does not cover the whole field of evangelical belief. But it indicates what the identity of an evangelical is. If a professed Christian does not entertain the type of belief which the foregoing summary represents, then he is not an evangelical.

The term 'Modernist' is flexible enough to include much diversity of belief. Indeed it is this flexibility that may be said to mark out and differentiate modernism. The modernist is exactly the person who, professing to be Christian, is not characterised by the well-defined and articulate viewpoint or system of belief which the foregoing portrayal of evangelicalism represents. He does not avow that viewpoint; it is not his faith. The more intelligently self-conscious he is the more he frankly disavows it. Even when he is simply noncommittal he is still modernist. For the evangelical is never agnostic on what belongs to the Christian faith; he is positively assertive, and unequivocal confession is a distinguishing mark of his identity.

#### THE MODERNIST'S UNBELIEF

We may instance some examples of the modernist's belief. He is quite opposed to the doctrine of Holy Scripture which the evangelical holds. Indeed this is the point at which he most

vehemently and perhaps scornfully disagrees. He is not willing to accede to the doctrine of eternal perdition. Faith respecting the virgin birth of our Lord is not essential to what he considers to be the doctrine of the incarnation. Substitutionary atonement in the sense so precious to the evangelical does not condition the faith in Christ which he professes.

The modernist cannot be hospitable to the exclusiveness of the Christian faith which excludes all hope for men who are outside the pale of the gospel revelation and for that reason his evangelistic interest cannot be impassioned by the fervour and urgency which belief in the lost condition of men must generate. It is apparent, therefore, that the belief or lack of belief of the modernist defines an entirely different pattern from that of the evangelical. Radically different conceptions of the Christian faith are involved in these opposing views and the modernist is alert enough to recognise that divergence. He recoils at those very points which constitute the essence of the evangelical faith.

#### GOD.

First and foremost there is a different conception of God. The God of the evangelical is a God who, consistently with His perfections, will consign men to everlasting perdition. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is such a God. Our Lord Jesus Himself said so. The modernist says he cannot believe in such a God, that this belief is incompatible with what he believes to be the God of love. It is surely apparent, therefore, that the God of the evangelical is not the God of the modernist. For, after all, the God in whom we believe and whom we worship is not the vocables by which He is designated but the God with respect to whom we entertain certain conceptions.

We can use all the titles by which God is named in Holy Scripture, but unless we entertain the proper conception of the God thus designated we are not believing in or worshipping Him. We may honour Him with our lips and our hearts be far from Him. There must be truth in the inward parts. And since the modernist openly disavows conceptions of God which are integral to the faith of the evangelical, they do not worship the same God. It is not man's prerogative to search the heart of another. But here we are not dealing with what is *hidden* in the heart but with concrete, open confession which we are in a position to evaluate and must evaluate. Otherwise all discrimination is at an end.

#### CHRIST.

Again, let us think of Christ. The evangelical believes that Christ vicariously bore upon the cross the penalty due to our

sins, that He satisfied the justice of God and propitiated His wrath, that God the Father delivered up His own Son to the damnation which our sins deserved. The faith which the evangelical reposes in Christ and which changes his whole outlook for time and for eternity is conditioned by this view of Calvary. Take away substitutionary atonement in the sense defined and the evangelical cannot rest in Christ for salvation. But the modernists do not always carry to logical conclusions the basic recoil from it. In any case, he will insist that Christian faith or the Christian faith is not tied to that conception of the cross. Is it not obvious, therefore, that on the most cardinal question of faith in Christ there is radical difference and that the Christ of the one is basically different from that of the other?

#### THE BIBLE.

Let us think also of Holy Scripture. The difference here is concerned with our view of revelation from God as it comes into concrete and practical relation to us. Nothing affects our religion all along the line of its activity more intimately than our view of revelation. Revelation is the source and norm of all thinking of God, of Christ, of salvation, of vocation, and of destiny. If the modernist's view of revelation as it comes into relevant relation to us is so different that he cannot accept the Bible to be what the evangelical so jealously regards it, then divergence appears not only at specific points of belief but in connection with that which determines and conditions all belief within the realm of faith and worship. That which gives direction to all thinking and believing is conceived of in radically divergent ways.

We thus see how impossible it is to bridge the gulf that divides between the two brands of belief with which we are dealing. It is only by *suppression* or *compromise* of conviction that the cleavage can be discounted. And this is honest neither for the evangelical nor the modernist. The differences are not peripheral—any candid appraisal shows that they are concerned with what is central in faith and worship. Even though modernists do not always carry to logical conclusions the basic assumptions of their position and sometimes espouse tenets which have no warrant on other than evangelical premises, premises which they disavow and even combat, yet the basic assumptions always persist and come to vocal expression at cardinal points of belief and confession. Their world of thought is alien to that of evangelical conviction.

#### THE ISSUES INVOLVED.

When we address ourselves to the question of co-operation in evangelism, it is to evade the implications of the foregoing analysis to overlook the fundamental differences. The concep-

tion of God is radically divergent for it concerns nothing less basic than what belongs to God as justice and love. The conception of Christ is radically divergent for it concerns nothing less than the doctrine of His cross as well as the mode of His incarnation. The conception of revelation is radically divergent, and so the difference concerns that which gives character to all that falls within the compass of faith and devotion. Shall we say then that such apostolic injunctions as those of 2 Corinthians 6 : 14-18; 2 John 10, 11 have no relevance? Are we to say that they have no bearing upon fellowship in evangelism?

It needs no argument that evangelism is one of the most sacred functions assigned to the church of Christ. It is not the whole work of preaching but it is a large part of it. Evangelism is the proclamation of the message of the gospel. And in no detail of the church's function and commission is it more important to maintain purity of witness and of fellowship. All evangelicals would surely agree that we could not possibly, without the most tragic betrayal of Christ, co-operate with Mohammedans or Hindus in promoting evangelism. The antithesis is so blatant that the suggestion is absurd. 'What communion hath light with darkness?' (2 Corinthians 6 : 14). The relevance of Paul's challenge is immediately clear.

Vehement opposition will be offered to the relevance of such an illustration. Admittedly modernists, in terms of our discussion, are not Mohammedans or Hindus. It is also clear that Paul in the passage from which we have just quoted is dealing with pagan idolatry. 'What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?' (verse 16). We must not by any means overlook the specific context in which these injunctions occur or the situation that the apostle has in view. But that the teaching of Paul does not apply to the situation with which we are now dealing is not to be hastily concluded.

We must bear in mind that, if the principle which underlies the apostle's injunction is relevant to our situation, then we cannot escape their application, however different may be the circumstances. That is the implication of the relevance of Scripture as the infallible rule of faith and practice. It is obvious that Paul could not have had Mohammedanism in mind when he wrote the second epistle to Corinth. But it is equally obvious, at least to every evangelical, that 2 Corinthians 6 : 14-18 applies to this kind of fellowship with Mohammedans just as surely as to the unbelievers whom Paul had distinctly in view.

As respects the question we are discussing, we may not forget the radical cleavage that divides evangelicals and

modernists. We found radically divergent conceptions of the Christian faith. The God of the evangelical is not the God of the modernist. The Christ of the evangelical is not the Christ of the modernist. Revelation, as the source and norm of all faith and worship, is conceived of in radically different ways. There cannot be a residual common basis of faith and worship for the simple reason that the conceptions which are central to both faith and worship are so radically divergent.

It is this impasse that the evangelical must reckon with. For it is precisely that kind of impasse that dictated the inspired severities of 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. If we plead that this passage is not applicable to the question at issue, it is only because we have failed to discern the grave issues at stake in the gulf that divides between evangelical faith and modernist unbelief.

#### DID PAUL CO-OPERATE?

We have good reason to believe that the heresy which disturbed the churches of Galatia was far from being characterised by many of the errors which distinguish present-day modernism. The Judaisers were undoubtedly professed Christians. And the evidence would indicate that they did not controvert Paul's gospel on many of its most precious tenets. For Paul did not find occasion in his epistle to defend many of the articles of the Christian faith which he propounds elsewhere. But because the Judaisers had perverted the grand article of justification by grace through faith he pronounced his *anathema*.

He called this perversion 'another gospel, which is not another', and added, 'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed' (Galatians 1:7-9). No imprecation could be stronger than that of *anathema*. Are we to suppose that Paul would have co-operated with these perverters of the gospel of Christ in promoting evangelism? The suggestion is inconceivable. He could allow for no obscuration of the issues at stake. To the core of his being he was convinced that the perversion took the crown from the Redeemer's head and was aimed at the damnation of perishing souls. 'Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace' (Galatians 5:4).

Are the issues at stake in the modernist controversy of less moment? Strange blindness has overtaken us if we think so. And we have little of Paul's passion left. The Judaising heresy

struck at the heart of the gospel. Consequently Paul's intolerance. Modernism gives us a new version of Christianity and that is worse than perversion. May we then co-operate with modernists in one of the most sacred functions committed to Christ's church? The thought is intolerable.

#### ARE JOHN'S INJUNCTIONS RELEVANT?

Or let us think for a moment with the disciple whom Jesus loved. John had written that 'many false prophets are gone out into the world' (1 John 4 : 1). And 'to the elect lady and her children' (2 John 1) he writes, 'Whosoever transgresseth (or goeth before), and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God' (2 John 9). There is incisiveness and decisiveness. Perhaps we don't like it. But John had learned the mind of his Lord. And so he continues, 'If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds' (2 John 10, 11).

The modernism with which we are confronted today may not take precisely the same form as the denial which John had specifically in view. But that the modernist's denials go counter to the doctrine of Christ is just as evident. John's word must therefore be relevant and regulative in our context. There is a stringency about John's prohibition that goes further than anything with which we are now concerned—we are not to receive the exponent of false doctrine into our house. How much less may we enter into partnership and fellowship in promoting the gospel? To participate with him or to join hands with him in that which is most sacred goes right in the teeth of John's interdict. If there is one thing that comes under John's ban it is *co-operation*. For then we would not only be extending to him the kind of hospitality which John condemns but we would be publicly entering into partnership in the promoting of the faith and, in terms of John's verdict, become partakers of his evil deeds.

This latter assessment is significant. It is not only the gross works of the flesh that can be characterised as evil deeds. The promulgation of false doctrine falls under that indictment. John calls the teaching of deceivers an iniquitous work. We dare not obscure the antithesis to the doctrine of Christ by extending to the proponent of this evil the hospitality and greeting which are the tokens of Christian fellowship. The word of Paul has the same import: 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them' (Ephesians 5 : 11). After all, John and Paul are one when doctrine that strikes at the pivots of our faith is the issue. It is not only the doctrine that is to be condemned: co-operation with its emissaries is unthinkable.

## PREACH TO ALL, CO-OPERATE WITH BELIEVERS ONLY.

The gospel is to be preached to all men irrespective of creed. The evangelical must seize every opportunity to bear witness to the faith in its purity and power. If, for example, a modernist minister invites the evangelical to preach and makes available certain facilities to this end, the evangelical may not decline the invitation simply on the ground that the request comes from one who is a modernist any more than may he decline a similar invitation from a Mohammedan.

Or if a group of modernists in concert with one another extend such an invitation, the evangelical may not decline to preach the gospel in compliance with such a request simply on the ground that the invitation comes from and the opportunity is offered by such an organisation. The evangelical must indeed preach the gospel in its integrity and purity *and preach it in its direct bearing upon the unbelief of which the same modernists are the exponents*. Otherwise he is unfaithful to his evangelical witness—preaching must be negative as well as positive.

But the point now is that no principle of fidelity to Christ need be compromised by preaching the evangel under these circumstances. Paul did not compromise in the midst of the Areopagus when he preached the gospel in answer to the invitation, 'May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by thee?' (Acts 17 : 19). It may indeed be the case that in a certain situation, because of other conditions and circumstances, the evangelical would be required to decline. He might judge that more prejudice would be done to the witness of the gospel and to his own witness by acceptance. Into these conditions and circumstances it is not necessary to enter. Suffice it to say that the source from which the invitation comes does not of itself require the evangelical to decline the invitation. Fidelity to Christ and to His commission may demand acceptance.

This does not, however, annul the thesis of this article, namely, that evangelicals may not co-operate with modernists in promoting the gospel, nor even co-operate in sponsoring an evangelistic undertaking. The reason is that then partnership or fellowship with the exponents of unbelief comes into being and it is this co-operation that the Scripture forbids. The distinction is not one so finely spun that it may be alleged to be one without a difference. There is a wide gulf of difference between preaching the gospel at the invitation of modernists, on the one hand, and entering into partnership with modernists for the promotion of the gospel, on the other. It is in principle the distinction between preaching the gospel to Mohammedans at their invitation and co-operating with

Mohammedans in sponsoring and promoting gospel proclamation. In the latter case there is the *partnership* which the Bible condemns; in the former there is but the proclamation of the gospel to all and this the commission of Christ requires.

#### GOD'S REVEALED WILL VS THE PRAGMATIC TEST.

It is sometimes urged as an argument in favour of the co-operation and mixed sponsorship which this article contests that the signal blessing of God has been witnessed in evangelical enterprises where this kind of co-operation has been practised. There are a few observations which should be borne in mind. First of all, God is sovereign and fulfills His holy purposes of grace through the medium of actions which are in direct contravention of His revealed will. The crucifixion of our Lord is the supreme example. The arch-crime of human history is not relieved of its extreme wickedness by the fact that in this same event of the accursed tree God fulfilled His supreme purpose of love and grace for lost men (cf Acts 2 : 23; 4 : 27, 28). What God does in the overruling movements of His providence is not the rule by which we may determine what is right for us.

Secondly, God blesses His own Word, and He often blesses it when it is proclaimed under auspices which do not have the approval of His revealed will. It is not ours to limit God in the exercise of His gracious sovereignty. But He has limited us by His revealed will. Beyond that revealed will we may never act or in contravention of it.

Thirdly, Paul the apostle could rejoice when Christ was preached even of envy and strife and faction and pretence. He rejoiced because Christ was proclaimed. And surely he had respect to the saving effects which would follow from such proclamation. The gospel is not negated as to its character or power by the wrong motives or intentions of those who proclaim it. But this does not condone or justify these motives. In the like manner we are not to condone the *method* by which Christ may be proclaimed simply because the gospel is proclaimed and saving fruits accrue therefrom.

We may, like Paul, rejoice that Christ is preached and yet must severely condemn the auspices under which this proclamation takes place.

The upshot is, therefore, that our thought is to be regulated by the revealed will of God. Whenever we relinquish this criterion and attempt to judge what is well-pleasing to God by results, then we have made pragmatism our rule. This is the way of darkness and not of light. In no sphere of our activity must the principle that God's *revealed* will is the rule for us

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**INCREASE IN PRICE**

With much regret we have to tell readers of an increase in the subscription rates for 1976. The price of *The Gospel Magazine* for 1976 (six issues) is 18p per copy, with an additional 6½p postage for single copies. The post paid subscription rate for the whole of 1976 is £1.50p.

Readers who have already paid their subscription for 1976 at the former rate obtaining last year are requested kindly to include the additional 40p when they are next writing to us, or sending their subscription for 1977. This will save extra postage, and additional book-keeping.

**There will be no change in the advertisement rates for the present;** but we expect that new charges will be announced later in the year. The present rates are:

One whole page — £10.

Half a page — £5.50p

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5% reduction for a series of six or more consecutive insertions.

Beginning with this issue, January-February 1976, it is hoped to issue *The Gospel Magazine* as near as possible to the start of the first month of each issue's currency. Thus it is hoped to publish the next issue for March-April about March 1.

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**CO-OPERATION IN EVANGELISM?**

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be guarded and applied with greater jealousy than in those sacred functions which are ours by the commission of the Saviour!

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