

Editorial

For a New Year message may I direct your thoughts to that gracious promise of the Lord Jesus Christ — “Lo, I am with you always”. Matt. 28:20. The Bible is lusted with golden promises and this is surely one of the brightest.

We know not what the new year may bring; for some it will mean untrodden paths; others may experience days of reverse — even then the Lord goes with us in fulfilment of His promise. Again, others may experience days of loneliness. The Apostle Paul knew something of this, for he wrote, “all men forsook me but the Lord stood by me”. The ever present Lord never fails.

This promise however, is not only intended to serve as a message of comfort, it also constitutes a challenge. We are to live our lives as in Christ’s presence. We need constantly to remember Hagar’s words “Thou God seest me” (Genesis 16:13). If we realised this it would prevent many a hasty word, many a questionable act and it would transform relationships one with the other.

It is impossible to think of words more comforting, strengthening and cheering than “Lo, I am with you always”. No words have given such consolation to Christians in every age — there is no day, no hour in which Christ is not present with His people. None but true Christians have such an Almighty, constant Companion, such an unfailing Friend.

David Livingstone once said “would you like me to tell you what supported me through the years of exile among a people whose attitude was always uncertain and hostile — it was this — “Lo, I am with you always”. On those words I staked everything and they never failed”.

May we realise as never before the abiding presence of Christ.

An encouraging promise

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee”
Isaiah 26:3

This is a word given by God in one of the darkest hours of Israel's history — a time of confusion and distress. It is also a word in season for us today living as we do in a world of change and decay. Around us in large measure is chaos and collapse and there is much to cause despondency and sadness. This then is a relevant word. If we would receive and rest upon this promise we would be lifted above the prevailing pessimism and despondency.

1. THE BLESSING PROMISED. *“perfect peace”*

The literal rendering of the Hebrew is “peace, peace”; reduplication being a favourite form of emphasis. One writer commenting on this verse says “it is as though the soul dwelt within double doors”. It is indeed our privilege to live inside the double doors of God's loving care. He says to us “peace, peace” and if one assurance is not enough, He follows it with a second. We have indeed “a strong city” the bulwarks and walls are massive, salvation is appointed and prepared (see verse 1).

We remember that on the evening of the resurrection the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of peace twice over, which calmed the troubled hearts of the disciples. “Jesus stood in the midst and said unto them, peace be unto you... then said Jesus to them again, peace be unto you” John 20:19, 21.

It is this verse in Isaiah which gave to the Rev. E. H. Bickersteth the inspiration for his hymn “Peace, perfect peace” as he sought to bring comfort to a dying relative. The first line of each verse is in the form of a question which is answered in the second line. What an encouragement there is in the verse which reads:

“Peace, perfect peace, the future all unknown?

Jesus we know and He is on the throne.”

There is no promise in the Bible that we shall experience freedom from trouble and trials in this present life. But in the midst of the fiercest battle and while the storm is at its height, the trusting soul may experience perfect peace. Possession of this unbroken peace does not depend on the absence of trouble but on the presence of God. Even our troubled days may be calm.

2. THE REQUIREMENT DEMANDED. *“whose mind is stayed on Thee”*.

Here is a warning against wavering or uncertainty; of looking away

from God to ourselves or to the world around us. We must see to it that our mind is stayed upon God. The margin of the Bible gives an alternative rendering — “thought or imagination”. We anticipate and imagine so many things which never happen. We harbour such dark forebodings and our imaginations at times run riot so that it is no wonder we are disturbed.

Perfect peace comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ — “He is our peace” (Eph. 2:14) He is the channel by which God’s peace flows into our souls. Peace is also a fruit of the Spirit — Gal. 5:22 — as the Holy Spirit fills and floods our lives so He produces this wonderful fruit in us. Peace also comes through the Word of God “Great peace have they which love Thy law and nothing shall offend them” or disturb them (Psalm 119:165.) Here is a promise to those who love and meditate on the Scriptures.

3. THE CALL TO FAITH. *“Trust ye in the Lord for ever...” (verse 4)*

The One in whom we are to trust is none other than the Unchangeable and Eternal God. Jehovah is the name by which He entered into covenant with His people. He has bound Himself by solemn words, we can reckon on God. “Hath he said, and shall He not do it: or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” Num. 23: 19.

“Trust ye” — we need a personal faith — only this will avail in the storms of life. The Bible repeatedly stresses the need of personal trust and says that Christ and His benefits are available only to those who truly believe. Those who really trust find this priceless blessing of a peace which passes all understanding. (Phil. 4:4).

In a shaking world we may be secure. The Bible teaches the absolute security of God’s people — “as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is around about His people” Psalm 125: 2. He holds His own with a tenacious grip, none can pluck them out of His hand.

4. PERMANENT STABILITY *“in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength”.*

Here again the margin rendering is helpful — “Rock of Ages”. It was this verse that supplied Augustus Toplady with the inspiration for his great hymn “Rock of Ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee”, which has moved hearts and brought penitential tears to my eyes. They who are fastened to the Rock of Ages are safe in its unchangeable strength. He is eternal and changeless and never fails those who trust in Him. “My heart and my flesh faileth but God is the rock of my heart and my portion for ever”.

How thankful we should be if we can truly say:

“Oh, safe to the Rock that is higher than I,
My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly;
So sinful, so weary, Thine, Thine would I be,
Thou blest Rock of Ages, I'm hiding in Thee”.

We come once again to the beginning of a New Year, what it may bring none of us know. The road ahead may be rough, our circumstances trying in the extreme but here is a promise which will bear all our weight “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee”.

“Stayed upon Jehovah
Hearts are fully blest;
Finding as He promised,
Perfect peace and rest” (F. R. Havergal)

M.H.

A Touching Letter

Dear Editor,

I sincerely hope this finds you well, and in the very best of spirits this fine day.

There can be no happier day in my life than that day when a kind friend gave me a copy of your fine paper the Gospel Magazine. I read it from beginning to end and it is now among my very treasured possessions. May God bless you for the good you are doing in your publications and for the help I have found in its pages.

I am a leper patient with already deformed hands and feet almost a complete invalid. I have thirteen children: five boys and eight girls. All attend school except the four older boys and the three older girls who were forced to quit school because of our family financial problems. I have no parents to help me in my poverty and affliction.

I should be very glad and thankful for some of your good readers to write and spare me some love while I am still in this present life of mine and before kindly death will bring me to our heavenly home.

Many thanks,

Antonio Lamban
Calle San Juan
Cebu City 6000 2464
Manila, Philippines 2801

A Friend in Need

J. C. RYLE

A friend is one of the greatest blessings on earth. Tell me not of money; affection is better than gold; sympathy is better than lands. He is the poor man who has no friends.

The world is full of sorrow because it is full of sin. It is a dark place; it is a lonely place; it is a disappointing place. The brightest sunbeam in it is a friend. Friendship halves our troubles and doubles our joys. A real friend is scarce and rare. There are many who will eat and drink and laugh with us in the sunshine of prosperity; there are few who will stand by us in the days of darkness — few who will love us when we are sick, helpless and poor — few, above all, who will care for our souls.

I recommend to your notice a real Friend, One “who sticketh closer than a brother,” a Friend for time and eternity. Let me tell you something about Him. The Friend I want you to know is Jesus Christ.

A FRIEND IN NEED

Such a Friend is the Lord Jesus Christ. Man is the neediest creature on God's earth because he is a sinner. There is no need so great as that of sinners. Poverty, hunger, thirst, cold, sickness, all are nothing in comparison. Sinners need pardon and they are utterly unable to provide it for themselves. They need deliverance from a guilty conscience and the fear of death and they have no power of their own to obtain it. This need the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to relieve. “He came into the world to save sinners.” (1 Timothy 1:15).

We are all by nature poor dying creatures. From the king on his throne to the pauper in the workhouse we are all sick of a mortal disease of soul. Whether we know it or not, whether we feel it or not, we are all dying daily. The plague of sin is in our blood. We cannot cure ourselves and are hourly getting worse and worse. All this the Lord Jesus undertook to remedy. He came into the world “to bring it health and cure.” He came to deliver us from “the second death.” He came “to abolish death, and bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel.” (Jeremiah 33:6; Revelation 2:11; 2 Timothy 1:10).

We were all by nature imprisoned debtors. We owed our God ten thousand talents and had nothing to pay. We were wretched bankrupts, without hope of discharging ourselves. We could never have freed ourselves from our load of liabilities and were daily getting deeper and deeper involved. All this the Lord Jesus saw and undertook to remedy.

He engaged to ransom and redeem us. He came "to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." "He came to redeem us from the curse of the law." (Hosea 13:14; Isaiah 61:1; Galatians 3:13).

We were all by nature shipwrecked and cast away. We could never have reached the harbour of everlasting life. We were sinking in the midst of the waves, shiftless, hopeless, helpless and powerless, tied and bound by the chain of our sins, floundering under the burden of our own guilt and likely to become a prey to the devil. All this the Lord Jesus saw and undertook to remedy. He came down from heaven to be our mighty Helper. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost," and to "deliver us from going down into the pit." (Psalm 89:19; Luke 19:10; Job 33:24).

I ask you to think on these things. Search all history from the beginning of the world. Look round the whole circle of those you know and love. You never heard of such friendship among the sons of men. There never was such a real friend in need as Jesus Christ.

A FRIEND IN DEED

Such a Friend is the Lord Jesus Christ. The true extent of a man's friendship must be measured by his deeds. Tell me not what he says and feels and wishes. Tell me not of his words and letters. Tell me rather what he does. "Friendly is that friendly does."

The doings of the Lord Jesus Christ for man are the grand proof of His friendly feeling towards him. Never were there such acts of kindness and self-denial as those which He has performed on our behalf. He has not loved us in word only but in deed.

For our sakes He took our nature upon Him and was born of a woman. He who was very God and equal with the Father laid aside for a season His glory and took upon Him flesh and blood like our own. The Almighty Creator of all things became a little babe like any of us and experienced all our bodily weaknesses and infirmities, sin only excepted. "Though He was rich, He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9).

For our sakes He lived thirty-three years in this evil world, despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Though He was King of kings, He had not where to lay His head. Though He was Lord of lords, He was often weary and hungry and thirsty and poor. "He took upon Him the form of a servant and humbled Himself." (Philippians 2:7,8).

For our sakes He suffered the most painful of all deaths, even the death of the Cross. Though innocent and without fault He allowed Himself to be condemned and found guilty. He who was the Prince of

Life was led as a lamb to the slaughter and poured out His soul unto death. He “died for us.” (1 Thessalonians 5:10).

Was He obliged to do this? Oh, No! He might have summoned to His help more than twelve legions of angels and scattered His enemies with a word. He suffered voluntarily and of His own free will, to make atonement for our sins. He knew that nothing but the sacrifice of His body and blood could ever make peace between sinful man and a holy God. He laid down His life to pay the price of our redemption. He died that we might live. He suffered that we might reign. He bore shame that we might receive glory. “He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” “He was made sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” (1 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Such friendship as this passes man’s understanding. Friends who would die for those who love them we may have heard of sometimes. But who can find a man who would lay down his life for those that hate him? Yet this is what Jesus has done for us. “God commendeth His love, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8).

Ask all the tribes of mankind from one end of the world to the other and you will nowhere hear of a deed like this. None was ever so high and stooped down so low as Jesus the Son of God. None ever gave so costly a proof of his friendship. None ever paid so much and endured so much to do good to others. Never was there such a friend in deed as Jesus Christ!

A MIGHTY AND POWERFUL FRIEND

Such a Friend is Jesus Christ. Power to help is that which few possess in this world. Many have will enough to do good to others, but no power. They feel for the sorrow of others and would gladly relieve them if they could. They can weep with their friends in affliction, but are unable to take their grief away. But though man is weak, Christ is strong. Though the best of our earthly friends is feeble, Christ is almighty. “All power is given unto Him in heaven and earth.” (Matthew 28:18). No one can do so much for those whom he befriends as Jesus Christ. Others can befriend their bodies a little. He can befriend both body and soul. Others can do a little for them in time. He can be a Friend both for time and eternity.

He is able to pardon and save the very chief of sinners. He can deliver the most guilty conscience from all its burdens and give it perfect peace with God. He can wash away the vilest stains of wickedness and make a man whiter than snow in the sight of God. He can clothe a poor weak

child of Adam in everlasting righteousness and give him a title to heaven that can never be overthrown. In a word, He can give any one of us peace, hope, forgiveness and reconciliation with God, if we only trust in Him. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John, 1:7).

He is able to convert the hardest of hearts and create in man a new spirit. He can take the most thoughtless and ungodly people and give them another mind by the Holy Ghost which He puts in them. He can cause old things to pass away, and all things to become new. He can make them love the things which they once hated and hate the things which they once loved. He can "give them power to become the sons of God." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." (John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

He is able to preserve to the end all who believe in Him and become His disciples. He can give them grace to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, and fight a good fight to the last. He can lead them on safely in spite of every temptation, carry them home through a thousand dangers and keep them faithful though they stand alone and have none to help them. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." (Hebrews 7:25).

He is able to give those that love Him the best of gifts. He can give them in life inward comforts which money can never buy, peace in poverty, joy in sorrow, patience in suffering. He can give them in death bright hopes which enable them to walk through the dark valley without fear. He can give them after death a crown of glory which fadeth not away, and a reward compared to which the Queen of England has nothing to bestow.

This is power indeed; this is true greatness. This is real strength. Go and look at the poor Hindoo idolator, seeking peace in vain by afflicting his body and, after fifty years of self-imposed suffering, unable to find it. Go and look at the benighted Romanist giving money to his priest to pray for his soul, and yet dying without comfort. Go and look at rich men spending thousands in search of happiness, and yet always discontented and unhappy. Then turn to Jesus and think what He can do, and is daily doing, for all who trust Him. Think how He heals all the broken-hearted, comforts all the sick, cheers all the poor that trust in Him and supplies all their daily need. The fear of man is strong. The opposition of this evil world is mighty. The lusts of the flesh rage horribly. The fear of death is terrible. The devil is a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, but Jesus is stronger than them all. Jesus can make us conquerors over all these foes. Then say whether it be not true that there never was so mighty a Friend as Jesus Christ.

A LOVING AND AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

Such a Friend is Jesus Christ. Kindness is the very essence of true friendship. Money and advice and help lose half their grace if not given in a loving manner. What kind of love is that of the Lord Jesus toward man? It is called "a love that passeth knowledge." (Ephesians 3:19).

Love shines forth in His reception of sinners. He refuses none that come to Him for salvation, however unworthy they may be. Though their lives may have been most wicked — though their sins may be more in number than the stars of heaven the Lord Jesus is ready to receive them and give them pardon and peace. There is no end to His compassion. There are no bounds to His pity. He is not ashamed to befriend those whom the world casts off as hopeless. There are none too bad, too filthy, and too much diseased with sin, to be admitted into His house. He has long proclaimed this to be His rule, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37).

Love shines forth in His dealings with sinners after they have believed in Him and become His friends. He is very patient with them though their conduct is often very trying and provoking. He is never tired of hearing their complaints, however often they may come to Him. He sympathises deeply in all their sorrows. He knows what pain is. He is acquainted with grief. In all their afflictions He is afflicted. He never allows them to be tempted above what they are able to bear. He supplies them with daily grace for their daily conflict. Their poor services are acceptable to Him. He is as well pleased with them as a parent is with his child's endeavours to speak and walk. He has caused it to be written in His Book that, "He taketh pleasure in His people," and that "He taketh pleasure in them that fear Him." (Psalm 149:4; 147:11).

Ah! there is no love on earth that can be named together with this. We love those in whom we see something that deserves our affection, or those who are our bone or our flesh. The Lord Jesus loves sinners in whom there is no good thing. We love those from whom we get some return for our affection. The Lord Jesus loves those who can do little or nothing for Him compared to what He does for them. We love where we can give some reason for loving. The great Friend of sinners draws His reasons out of His everlasting compassion. His love is purely disinterested, purely unselfish, purely free. Never, never was there so truly loving a Friend as Jesus Christ.

A WISE AND PRUDENT FRIEND

Such a Friend is the Lord Jesus Christ. Man's friendship is sadly blind. He often injures those he loves by injudicious kindness. He often errs in the counsel he gives. He often leads his friends into trouble by

bad advice, even when he means to help them. He sometimes keeps them back from the way of life and entangles them in the vanities of the world when they have well nigh escaped. The friendship of the Lord Jesus is not so. It always does us good and never evil.

The Lord Jesus never spoils His friends by extravagant indulgence. He gives them everything that is really for their benefit. He withholds nothing from them that is really good. But He requires them to take up their cross daily and follow Him. He bids them endure hardships as good soldiers. He calls on them to fight the good fight against the world, the flesh and the devil. His people often dislike it at the time and think it hard, but when they reach heaven they will see it was all well done.

The Lord Jesus makes no mistakes in managing His friends' affairs. He orders all their concerns with perfect wisdom. All things happen to them at the right time and in the right way. He gives them as much of sickness and as much of health, as much of poverty and as much of riches, as much of sorrow and as much of joy as He sees their souls require. "He leads them by the right way that they may go to a city of habitation." He mixes their bitterest cups like a wise physician and takes care that they have not a drop too little or too much. His people often misunderstand His dealings. They are silly enough to fancy their course of life might have been better ordered, but in the resurrection day they will thank God that not their will but Christ's was done.

Look round the world and see the harm which people are continually getting from their friends. Mark how much more ready men are to encourage one another in worldliness and levity than to provoke to love and good works. Think how often they meet together, not for the better but for the worse — not to quicken one another's souls in the way to heaven, but to confirm one another in the love of this present world. Alas! there are thousands who are wounded unexpectedly in the house of their friends! But then turn to the great Friend of sinners and see how different a thing is His friendship from that of man. Listen to Him as He walks by the way with His disciples. Mark how He comforts, reproves and exhorts with perfect wisdom. Observe how He times His visits to those He loves, as to Mary and Martha at Bethany. Hear how He converses as He dines on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" (John 21:16). His company is always sanctifying. His gifts are always for our soul's good. His kindness is always wise. His fellowship is always to edification. One day of the Son of Man is better than a thousand in the society of earthly friends. One hour spent in private communion with Him is better than a year in kings' palaces. Never, never was there such a wise Friend as Jesus Christ.

A TRIED AND PROVED FRIEND

Such a Friend is Jesus Christ. Thousands of years have passed since the Lord Jesus began His work of befriending mankind. During that long period of time He has had many friends in this world. Thousands on thousands have enjoyed the mighty privilege of His friendship and been saved. He has had great experience.

He has had friends of every rank and station in life. Some of them were kings and rich men like David and Solomon, and Hezekiah and Job. Some of them were very poor in this world, like the shepherds of Bethlehem and James and John and Andrew. But they were all alike Christ's friends.

He has had friends of every age that man can pass through. Some of them never knew Him till they were advanced in years like Manasseh and Zaccheus and the Ethiopian Eunuch. Some of them were His friends even from their earliest childhood, like Joseph and Samuel and Josiah and Timothy. But they were all alike Christ's friends.

He has had friends of every possible temperament and disposition. Some of them were simple plain men like Isaac. Some of them were mighty in word and deed like Moses. Some of them were fervent and warm-hearted as Peter. Some of them were gentle and retiring spirits like John. Some of them were active and stirring like Martha. Some of them loved to sit quietly at His feet like Mary. Some dwelt unknown among their own people like the Shunamite. Some have gone everywhere and turned the world upside down like Paul. But they were all alike Christ's friends.

He has had friends of every condition in life. Some of them were married and had sons and daughters like Enoch. Some of them lived and died unmarried like Daniel and John the Baptist. Some of them were often sick like Lazarus and Epaphroditus. Some of them were strong to labour like Persis and Tryphena and Tryphosa. Some of them were masters like Abraham and Cornelius. Some of them were servants like the saints in Nero's household. Some of them had had servants like Elisha. Some of them had bad masters like Obadiah. Some of them had bad wives and children like David. But they were all alike Christ's friends.

He has had friends of every nation and people and tongue. He has had friends in hot countries and in cold; friends among nations highly civilized and friends among the simplest and rudest tribes. His book of life contains the names of Greeks and Romans, of Jews and Egyptians, of bond and of free.

AN UNFAILING FRIEND

Such a Friend is the Lord Jesus Christ. The saddest part of all the good things of earth is their instability. Riches make themselves wings and flee away. Youth and beauty are but for a few years. Strength of body soon decays. Mind and intellect are soon exhausted. All is perishing; all is fading; all is passing away. But there is one splendid exception to this general rule and that is the friendship of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus is a Friend who never changes. There is no fickleness about Him. Those whom He loves, He loves unto the end. Husbands have been known to forsake their wives. Parents have been known to cast off their children. Human vows and promises of faithfulness have often been forgotten. Thousands have been neglected in their poverty and old age who were honoured by all when they were rich and young. But Christ never changed His feelings toward one of His friends. He is "the same yesterday, and today and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8).

The Lord Jesus never goes away from His friends. There is never a parting and goodbye between Him and His people. From the time that He makes His abode in a sinner's heart, He abides in it for ever. The world is full of leave-takings and departures. Death and the lapse of time break up the most united family. Sons go forth to make their way in life. Daughters are married and leave their father's house for ever. Scattering, scattering, scattering, is the yearly history of the happiest home. How many we have tearfully watched as they drove away from our doors whose pleasant faces we have never seen again! How many we have sorrowfully followed to the grave and then come back to a cold, silent, lonely and blank fireside! But thanks be to God! There is One who never leaves His friends. The Lord Jesus is He who has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5).

The Lord Jesus goes with His friends wherever they go. There is no possible separation between Him and those whom He loves. There is no place or position on earth or under the earth that can divide them from the great Friend of their souls. When the path of duty calls them far away from home, He is their companion. When they pass through the fire and water of fierce tribulation, He is with them. When they lie down on the bed of sickness, He stands by them and makes all their trouble work for good. When they go down the valley of the shadow of death and friends and relatives stand still and can go no further, He goes down by their side. When they wake up in the unknown world of Paradise, they are still with Him. When they rise with a new body at the judgement day, they will not be alone. He will own them for His friends and say, "They are mine, deliver them and let them go free." He will make good His own words, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20.)

Now look round the world and see how failure is written on all man's schemes. Count up the partings and separations and disappointments and bereavements which have happened under your own knowledge. Think what a privilege it is that there is One at least who never fails and in whom no one was ever disappointed! Never, never was there so unfailing a Friend as Jesus Christ.

Know then, first, that I call upon you to consider solemnly whether Christ is your Friend and you are His. There are thousands on thousands, I grieve to say, who are not Christ's friends. Baptized in His Name, outward members of His Church, attendants on the means of grace — all this they are no doubt, but they are not Christ's friends. Do they love the Saviour? No. Do they delight in the word of reconciliation? No. Do they try to speak with the Friend of sinners in prayer? No. Do they seek close fellowship with Him? No. Oh! how is it with you? Are you or are you not one of Christ's friends?

Know, in the next place, that if you are not one of Christ's friends you are a poor, miserable man. I do not say it without thought. I say that if Christ be not your Friend, you are a poor, miserable man. You are in the midst of a fading, sorrowful world and you have no real source of comfort or refuge for a time of need. You are a dying creature and you are not ready to die. You have sins and they are not forgiven. You are going to be judged and you are not prepared to meet God. You love the world better than Christ. You have no Friend in heaven to plead your cause. Yes! it is sadly true. You are a poor, miserable man. It matters nothing what your income is. Without Christ's friendship you are very poor.

Know in the last place that if Christ is your Friend you have great privileges and ought to walk worthy of them. Seek every day to have closer communion with Him who is your Friend and to know more of His grace and power. True Christianity is not merely believing a certain set of dry abstract propositions. It is to live in daily personal communication with an actual living Person, Jesus the Son of God. "For me," said Paul, "to live is Christ." (Philippians 1:21).

Seek every day to glorify your Lord and Saviour in all your ways. He that hath a friend should show himself friendly, and no man surely is under such mighty obligations as the friend of Christ. Avoid everything which would grieve your Lord. Fight hard against besetting sins, against inconsistency, against backwardness to confess Him before men. Say to your soul, whenever you are tempted to do that which is wrong, "Soul, Soul, is this thy kindness to thy Friend?"

Think above all of the mercy which has been shown thee, and learn to rejoice daily in thy Friend! What though thy body be bowed down with disease! What though thy poverty and trials be very great! What though

thine earthly friends forsake thee, and thou art alone in the world! All this may be true, but if thou art in Christ thou hast a Friend, a mighty Friend, a loving Friend, a wise Friend, a Friend that never fails. Oh! think, think much upon thy Friend.

Yet a little time and thy Friend shall come to take thee home, and thou shalt dwell with Him for ever. Yet a little time and thou shalt see as thou hast been seen and know as thou hast been known. And then thou shalt hear assembled worlds confess, that he is the rich and happy man who has had Christ for his Friend.

Jottings from a pilgrim's notebook

Luke 4:1-13. Here the Lord Jesus tells me how I can get the victory in times of temptation. In each of these three temptations Jesus replied, "it is written", and Satan was put to flight. What was the secret? It was not just the fact that He quoted scripture, that caused Satan to flee, but it was the fact that the word of God was the final authority in the life of Jesus for all He did.

I remember how He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." In 4:34: again He said, "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." The word of God was for Him the final authority for all He did and said. When tempted, Jesus as always considered what God has said on the subject, and He told Satan that these were His orders from God, and the subject was closed.

So for us we must be quite clear that God's word is our final authority for all we do or say. When we are tempted, we must make sure what God has said on the subject, and then state quite plainly, that this word for us is final. There is no argument, and we simply look to God to strengthen us to do His will. He never fails those who accept His word as final.

A.V.Mc.C.

True religion must never expect to be popular. It will have the praise of God, not man.

— J. C. Ryle

On the Birth of a Prince

W. J. PARKER (Colwyn Bay)

The birth of a baby is a great event in our Royal household. We join with the rejoicing crowds round the palace and the hospital. What a happy event this is for the parents and the grandparents. As soon as the event is known, congratulations, flowers, presents begin to flow in. We are reminded of the Incarnation of our Lord when they brought gifts of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. That was something for the present, something for life, and something for the future, in His case the death on Calvary. The family look beyond the present to the baby's future. What will it be? 'We're almost a Polo team' says the father. 'I hope he'll play cricket for Gloucester' says the grandfather. All these experiences have their parallels in the Kingdom of God!

I. Think of the parents and the child. Who is responsible for the child's coming into being? The parents of course. So it is in God's kingdom. The New Birth, Salvation, and Adoption are God's will for us. Remember Heb. 2.10. 'It was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.' and John 1.12. 'As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe on His Name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' Paul says in Romans 9.16. 'So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.' That is, it is not of our own will, not for our efforts, but of God's will for us, that we are saved. It is God who works in us, in conversion and in sanctification, both to will and to do, for His good pleasure. (Phil. 2.13.) The Sovereignty of God in our salvation calls for praise and thanksgiving.

II. Signs Everyone Looks for in a child. What colour are his eyes? How heavy was he at birth? Did he cry? What colour is his hair? What shape his head? Is he like his father? Does he feed well? And what we ask are the signs of a child of God?

(i) Repentance is the first cry of a new born spiritual babe. 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents' said our Lord. Lk. 15.10.

(ii) Faith is the next thing. It is commitment to the Saviour. Paul said to the Jailer at Philippi, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.' (Acts. 16.31). The apostle built on the broken state of the officer and taught him the second saving virtue. What is faith for us to-day? It has a threefold connotation. For the present it means believing

that what God says is true. God's Word IS truth. For the past it means believing that what Christ did in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension was effective for the salvation of His people. And for the future, it means believing that all the Promises of God through the prophets are true for us.

(iii) Love of Food. A healthy baby soon learns to take its mother's milk. Peter says young christians are similar: 'As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' (1. Pet. 2.2). How important 'nurture groups' are to teach spiritual children good habits in Bible study for spiritual nourishment.

(IV) Caring, or Cross-bearing. This is also an essential mark of a christian life a little later on. Jesus Himself said, 'Whosoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be my disciple.' We are saved to serve. And we serve Christ above, by serving one another here on earth. No cross, no crown. The Good Samaritan was the story of a caring person that Jesus used to teach this truth.

(V) Prayer is another sign of spiritual life. Children love to talk to their parents. If they cannot do this, they talk to someone else! Neglect of prayer is a terrible hindrance in the professing christian life. Parents also love to talk to their children. Conversation brings mutual trust, respect and, understanding between them. So it is between God and men. Paul said 'I desire that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.' (1 Tim. 2.8). These are two conditions for God hearing our prayers. Paternal respect is due to Him.

III. The Royal Inheritance. All the royal children are Princes, or Dukes. Whatever they share with other men, polo, cricket, or the like, they have a special inheritance. And with the inheritance goes a special training in preparation for it. So their education through childhood and youth are deeply affected by their destiny. Paul tells us that the same is true for God's children who are destined to share the throne with Him. They are to become a specially prepared people, Kings and Priests for God and His service. In Col. 1:10-12, Paul says 'that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God' There is the preparatory training, and way of life. Next, 'strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy.' There is the supportive strength and family example given us by the incarnate Lord Jesus. And 'giving thanks to the Father who has made us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' There is our calling and destiny. Praise the Lord.

The next day, being Sunday, the Church Bells rang peals of joy for the infant Prince. I am reminded of that old hymn:

Ring the bells of heaven! there is joy to-day.
For a soul returning from the wild!
See, the Father meets him out upon the way,
Welcoming His weary wandering child.
 Ring the bells of heaven! there is joy to-day,
 For the wanderer now is reconciled;
 Yes a soul is rescued from his sinful way,
 And is born anew a ransomed child.
Ring the bells of heaven! spread the feast to-day,
Angels, swell the glad triumphant strain!
Tell the joyful tidings! bear it far away!
For a precious soul is born again.
 Glory, glory how the angels sing;
 Glory, glory, how the loud harps ring!
 Tis the ransomed army, like a mighty sea,
 Pealing forth the anthem of the free.

Egypt and England — A Fresh look at Isaiah 19

STEPHEN V. REES

Mr Rees reads classics and theology at Cambridge; he also pastors a recently founded reformed Baptist Church in Stockport, Greater Manchester.

We are facing a time of civil strife unprecedented in our land during this century. As I write, firemen are searching through the debris of a Brighton hotel for the victims of political terrorism. At this moment miners and police are battling at the pitheads and in the quiet villages of Derbyshire and the Welsh valleys. The fabric of our society appears to be disintegrating. Believers find themselves shaken and bewildered by the eruption of strife and violence around them and by the political issues that underlie that violence. How much we need clear Biblical guidelines to direct our thinking and our action at such a time as this. This chapter from Isaiah's prophecy will, I believe, help us to understand God's dealings with our society. Of course, not every

prophecy of the Old Testament can in this way be applied directly to our situation: it can be dangerous for example to take God's words to his own chosen nation Israel and to apply them directly to the secular society of 20th century Great Britain. Here however we have a chapter addressed directly to a secular nation to Egypt, one of the historic enemies of God's people. It is a chapter designed to demonstrate something of the principles of God's dealings with a nation like ours. No doubt it also has a specific prophetic application but that is not our concern at this point. We need to learn from this chapter the practical lessons that are relevant to our situation.

As we read through the chapter we become aware immediately of its contemporary relevance. It is an account of what happens when God turns his hand in judgement against a nation. God comes riding on the swift cloud of judgement, angered by the idolatry of the nation (vs 1). The first section of the chapter (vss 2-15) details the consequences of that coming.

(a) Civil strife and anarchy (vs. 2)

The internal peace of the nation is utterly destroyed as God withdraws his restraining grace. The natural violence in the heart of fallen men is permitted to break forth in a tidal wave of hostility and strife. Families, neighbourhoods, cities, classes, are at war within themselves and against one another. Loyalty, trust, mutual respect, vanish and bitterness and anger take their place. In a single verse, Isaiah sums up the tragedy of our own nation. Every school, every factory, every office, bears witness to a simmering hostility: the hostility of young people against their teachers, their parents, the policeforce, the hostility of employees against their employers, the hostility of those living in the inner cities against the suburban 'elite'. Management set against unions, young set against old, black set against white, men set against women, privileged set against underprivileged. If we take Scriptures seriously, we will see in all this not simply the outcome of blind social forces but the judgement of God.

(b) Growth of occult interest. (vs 3)

In a society where peace and order have collapsed, men will turn, Isaiah tells us, to spiritual forces. Despairing of finding hope in this world, they seek the unseen world in their frantic desire to find something to which they can harness their hopes. Again, can any of us be unaware of the occult obsession that is sweeping our society, finding acceptance and respectability even in our newspaper columns and TV programmes? Where young people in the sixties still believed that the world could be changed politically now they have concluded that the

world of peace and love of which they once dreamed will not dawn — and it is to the world of the occult that many are turning.

(c) *The growth of tyranny* (v. 4)

Isaiah reminds us that times of anarchy again and again have become opportunities for the rise of merciless despots — ‘cruel lords and fierce kings’. In their despair, men will give ear to anyone who seems to offer any solution to the situation, be he an Adolf Hitler, a Josef Stalin or an Idi Amin. We have seen this in recent years in almost every black African state. One by one as they have gained independence, they have been plunged into civil strife and anarchy, and from that confusion totalitarian despots have emerged using absolute power for no other end than their own pleasure. We need to be aware of the growing movement in our land towards this sort of totalitarianism. We have a marvellously wrought system of checks and balances designed to prevent absolute power from falling into the hands of any individual or group, a system in which the power of the monarchy is checked by that of Parliament, the power of the Commons is checked by the Lords, the power of the governing party is checked by that of the Opposition parties, the power of central government is checked by local government, the power of legislators is checked by an independent judicature, the power of employers is checked by unions. That system of checks and balances is part of our Christian heritage. We are heirs of the Puritans who when they saw a monarch seeking to erode the power of Parliament, opposed him with all their power. Today that system of balanced restraints is under threat from every side: we are seeing in our land the growth of ‘tyrants’ (of every political persuasion) claiming from their supporters unlimited obedience and absolute loyalty. Again we must recognise in this the withdrawal of restraining grace.

(d) *Economic and industrial collapse.* (vs. 5-9)

The economy of Egypt is utterly dependent upon the seasonal ebb and flow of the Nile. Men in their prosperity have come to take for granted the benefits they receive year by year from God’s hand. Isaiah tells us that as God moves in judgement He withdraws those benefits. The Nile is dried up (vs. 5). The canals and streams that irrigate the land run dry too. Agriculture is ruined. (vs. 6 & 7). The fishermen and the weavers alike are appalled by the loss of their livelihood. (vs. 8-9). Total economic collapse faces the land — and ‘all the wage earners shall be sick at heart’. Do we need to elaborate on the relevance of this to our once great nation?

Crisis rules throughout the land of Egypt — and there is nothing anyone can do to avert it. The economists, the scholars, the researchers,

are all equally helpless to find answers. (vs 11-12). Those who profess to have the answers lead the nation into ever-deeper trouble (vs. 13). There is nothing, says Isaiah that can be done. (vs. 15). Root and branch, the society appears to be doomed.

What can we learn from Isaiah's analysis? Three great lessons emerge. Two of them are drawn from the section we have already examined; the third is found in the second half of the passage.

(1) God is sovereign in the distress of our nation.

Isaiah tells us clearly that the strife and confusion that reigns in Egypt is under the direct and sovereign hand of God. Verse 2 — “*I* will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians...” Verse 3 — “*I* will destroy the counsel thereof...” All that happens happens “because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts which he hath determined against it” (verse 17), Christians should not and need not despair: God is working all things together for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. Christians should never slide into the world's way of thinking and think that political leaders and public figures are the ultimate directors of the future of the nation. We do not understand the mysterious way in which the Lord directs the wicked impulses of men for his own glory and the good of his people, but we are assured that it is the Lord who alike brings prosperity and creates disaster. (Isa 45:7) As Amos puts it, “Can there be evil in a city and the Lord *not* have caused it?” (Amos 3:6). Men and women — prime ministers or union leaders — have only that power which is given to them from above — by the Lord who is working all things together according to the counsel of His will. God is still in control!

(2) No means used to remedy the distress of the nation can be effectual apart from the mercy of God.

To easily we can come to share the assumption of the world that the answer to our problem lies within ourselves. The atheist may claim that all the events of history are the outcome of inevitable and immutable laws of historical and economic development — he will tell us that if only we could understand those laws perfectly and harness them efficiently, we could solve the world's problems. Isaiah however, tells us clearly that when God sets his hand against a nation, there is no remedy to be found by men. Surely by now we should have learned this lesson. Different governments, different philosophies, different policies — none have proved to be an answer to our situation. As Isaiah tells us, men cannot even *predict* “what the Lord of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt.” Our hope as Christians, is not to be in political parties or in leaders, but in the living God.

(3) *God is able to use the distress of our nation to turn the nation to himself.*

Isaiah 19 is not only the account of God's judgement against Egypt. It is also the account of how God can use that judgement to turn men's hearts to himself. The passage does not constitute a guarantee that he will invariably use his judgements to that end — but, it does lay before us the glorious *possibility* that his judgement will be the precursor to his blessing. He tells us that in this time of crisis, the Egyptians will be overtaken by fear. (vs 16). They will come to recognise that the disasters that have befallen them are not simply the outcome of chance but have been brought upon them by the God of Judah (vs 17). They will dread the very name of God's people because it will be to them a standing reminder of the wrath of God that overshadows them. Driven by that holy fear they will repent and turn to the God of Israel. They will identify themselves with God's people and speak the language of Canaan. There will be communities within the land of Egypt where God is honoured and feared. (vs. 18). There, in the midst of his enemies, God will establish a permanent witness to himself, and those who were his enemies will render him worship. For the sake of His people, God will send to the distressed nation a deliverer (vs. 20) — one who unlike the tyrants will use his authority lawfully, for their good. And — best of all “the LORD shall be known to Egypt” (v. 21). The same Lord who has smitten Egypt shall also heal it (v. 22), and those who were afar off will be brought near and united in peace and harmony. (vs 23-25).

Here then is God's pledge to us that our situation is not beyond hope. In Isaiah's day it must have seemed impossible that Egypt, that ever-threatening enemy to God's people could ever be conquered by grace. Isaiah tells us that God's redemptive judgement can break down the hardness even of an Egypt — or of a Great Britain. There is *always* hope.

Two practical implications emerge. Firstly, *this hope should direct our praying*. We long that the God who has brought his hand to bear against our nation will turn it to himself. His judgements will either harden the heart of our nation or will break it. We must pray that in judgement, God will remember mercy.

Secondly, *this hope should direct our witness*. We are told here that the Egyptians will come to fear the land of Judah — because they recognise that it is the God of Judah who has brought these distresses upon them. *Someone* must have told them the source of their troubles! We must unashamedly make this part of our testimony. We must drive home to the consciences of men and women that the disasters that have befallen our nation have occurred by the decree of *our* sovereign God — a God who is to be feared. Where an anaemic Arminianism will

attempt to excuse God from any part in these things, Biblically minded believers will boast of their God who is able to confound all the purposes and plans of men, a God who is awesome in judgement. When unbelievers listen to the news and comment in bewilderment, "I don't understand — how can these things happen?" true believers will respond unflinchingly, "They are happening because our God — the God of the Bible — is causing them to happen: *He* is setting the hearts of the British against the British, *He* is destroying the counsel of the wise". True believers will constantly use the events of the day to speak to men of God and of His holiness and of his judgements. They will seek to direct the minds of men beyond the distresses of our land to his *final* judgement of which all temporal distresses are but the faintest shadow. And they will point men to the great Deliverer: to Jesus who alone saves us from the wrath to come.

Isaiah's prophecy is a word of judgement — but it is also a word of hope. It assures us that as we pray and preach God is well able to take up the events of our day and to use them to turn men's hearts to himself. May it be so in our generation. Amen.

1985

THE LORD BLESS THEE...

How shall He bless thee?

With the gladness that knoweth no decay,

With the riches that cannot pass away,

With the sunshine that makes an endless day,

Thus may He bless thee!

...AND KEEP THEE. Numbers 6:24

How shall He keep thee?

With the all-covering shadow of His wings,

With the strong love that guards from evil things,

With the sure power that safe to glory brings,

Thus may He keep thee!

“Unto the Son He saith... Thy years shall not fail”

Hebrews 1:8,12

THE LATE ARCHDEACON NOYES

When the Christian contemplates the changing and finite character of all here, the rapid flight of time and the years swiftly passing, it is blessed to meditate upon that which is changeless and unending.

“Change is our portion here;
Soon fades the summer sky,
The landscape droops in autumn sear,
And spring flowers bloom to die;
But faithful is Jehovah’s word,
‘I will be with thee’ saith the Lord.

Changeless, the way of peace;
Changeless, Emmanuel’s name;
Changeless, the covenant of grace;
Eternally the same.
‘I change not’, is a Father’s word, —
‘And I am with thee’, saith the Lord”.

1. *God is eternal and unchanging.* “From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God” (Psalm 90:2) By His prophet Malachi, He says: “I am the Lord, I change not”. His covenant of grace, which secures the salvation of His people, is changeless, for “God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us”. (Heb. 6:17,18) The way of peace is changeless, for Christ’s redemption is an “eternal redemption” (see Heb. 9:12) and His salvation is an “eternal salvation” — “being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him” (Heb. 5:9).

2. *The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is eternal,* He is “Emmanuel, God with us”. What a sublime Scripture is that in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, verses 10-12 “And, Thou, Lord, (i.e. the Lord Jesus — see the context) in the beginning, hast laid the foundation

of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands; they shall perish, but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same and Thy years shall not fail (cease)". No words could more clearly express the eternity of the Son of God, Christ Jesus.

3. *The Holy Ghost, too, is eternal* (Heb. 9:14). The Lord Jesus promised concerning Him, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth".

If we have a well-founded hope in Christ, we look forward to an eternity of blissful happiness with Him. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son, hath (the) life" (1 John 5: 11,12)

We cannot have a truly happy New Year, unless we believe these verities in our heart, and have "a good hope through grace". "Being born again....by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever". (1. Peter 1:23).

For Younger Readers

CARINE MacKENZIE

KEEPING IN TOUCH

0 1 0 6 1 0 6 6 4 2 3 4 0 4 !

If I dial these numbers on my telephone, I can in a very short time speak to a friend of mine who lives in Australia, on the other side of the world. Such amazing advances have been made in this means of communication in recent years that it has become very easy to get in touch with friends and relatives many, many miles away. It is great to think that just by dialling a few numbers we can speak to our friends and hear their voices.

But how much more wonderful it is to know that we can speak to God in heaven at any time. "God's eyes are on the just; his ears are open to their cry." Psalm 34.15. The Lord will hear when His people pray to him. He is a friend that sticketh closer than any brother and we are encouraged to keep in close contact with him. "The Lord will hear when I call unto him."

When we are in any trouble, how quickly we will rush to the telephone to get help. We probably know the doctor's telephone

number by heart in case of emergencies. And we could dial 999 to get in touch with the police, fire brigade or ambulance. We should pray to the Lord even more quickly. The words, "Lord help me" do not take long to utter. God has told us to pray to him when we are in trouble. "And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Psalm 50.15.

If we are phoning a friend or the doctor for help, we cannot expect them to know our needs until we tell them. But God cares for us and knows our needs better than we do ourselves. And often the answer to our prayers is being put into action even before we ask. "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isaiah 65.24)

Every telephone call that we make costs money. But we are invited to come to Jesus "without money, and without price." There is no charge for speaking with the Lord God.

Our telephone can sometimes go out of action. If there is a fault on the line or in the equipment, then dialling the numbers will not work. We will not get through to our friend. The Psalmist was worried about this problem in praying to God. "If I regard iniquity in my heart" he said "the Lord will not hear me." Our sin can come between us and God but how thankful we should be that Jesus Christ has died to cleanse us from this sin and He is a mediator between sinners like us and the holy, just and good God. If it were not for Him, we could never approach God in prayer.

When the phone rings in the house, we rush to answer it. We want to know who is trying to get in touch with us and what they have to say. Are we so quick to want to know what God has to say to us? Do we say "I'll hear what God the Lord will speak"? Are we eager to listen to God's words and to obey them?

So when we use the phone for one reason or another, let it remind us of the person we should speak to most of all — our elder Brother, our best Friend, our help in time of need.

The following numbers look like telephone numbers, but they are really reference numbers to different prayers in the Bible. The first number refers to the Book (e.g., 1 — Genesis, 2 Exodus, 3 Leviticus, etc.); the second to the chapter and the third to the verse. Find the verses and tell who was praying to God in them.

1) 13 — 4 — 10

2) 9 — 2 — 1

3) 15 — 10 — 1

4) 32 — 2 — 1

5) 11 — 8 — 22

6) 40 — 15 — 25

7) 42 — 18 — 13

8) 12 — 19 — 15

9) 27 — 9 — 4

10) 44 — 9 — 40

Hopeless Yet Healed

S. MALCOLM JONES (Maesycwmmmer)

Luke 8:43

If you describe someone as being incurable, and then go on to speak about their cure, I suppose people cannot really be blamed if they think you are being somewhat contradictory. Yet as I ask you to consider this story, you will discover that this is exactly what I am doing. For example, verse 43 reads, “neither could be healed of any”. But when you consider verses 44 and 48, you note that the woman was completely cured. The question is, how can you explain this? Simply in terms of the message of Jesus Christ and the gospel. For the gospel tells us that what is impossible with man is possible with God. This great truth is at the heart of this women’s cure. No one could help her until she met the Son of God; but he made her whole, and she went away in peace. Here is another miracle that is full of the gospel significance. Let us consider what lessons we can learn from it.

First of all, we can see as we read in verse 43, **HER HELPLESS CONDITION**. She had suffered from haemorrhages for twelve years. According to Mark 5:26 her condition was getting worse. As she was getting older the problem was increasing. What is more, in the hope of finding a cure she suffered many things from the physicians she consulted, all to no avail. Think about a group practice for a moment. One doctor calls and prescribes a particular treatment. The next doctor to call is different from the first caller. He suggests another treatment. The third doctor calls and he prescribes something again. Yet through it all the patient does not get better, in fact, the condition gets worse. This is how it was for the woman in this story. Clearly there was no answer to her problem. She could not even buy a cure.

There was no National Health Service in her day. She spent all she had in search of a cure, and yet she remained sick. It is this that makes me describe her as so helpless and needy.

Now this woman is like a mirror reflecting the spiritual and helpless condition of the human heart in its natural state. What is man’s basic problem? His sin. We are all born into this world with this common disease. We have all had a bad start in life. The psalmist said ‘in sin did my mother conceive me’. Psalm 51:5 He did not mean by this that he had been born out of wedlock. What he is saying is, that he was born with a sinful nature. His sinful practices were a clear proof of this. Now this is true of everyone that is born into this world. This is how God sees

you outside of Christ. What is more, there is no human answer to your problem. You cannot get rid of your sin by any effort or activity on your part. Every soul outside of Christ is as needy as the woman in this story.

Secondly, we turn to **HER HOPE OF A CURE**, verses 44 and 48. In Mark 5:27 we are told that 'she heard of Jesus'. Who he was, and possibly what miracles he had performed. From what the woman said, it was evident that what she heard affected her. For Mark 5:28 reads, 'she said, if I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole'. Finally this led to her coming to him for healing. In these events we can see those elements present which show us what saving faith is. In this woman's case there was knowledge, conviction and trust. What a clear definition of real faith! For this is how sinners are converted.

Aware of their sin, they hear of Jesus who is mighty to save and in faith they come to him for forgiveness and life eternal. This woman was made whole by Christ and she knew it (Mark 5:29) — even so when sinners are saved by Christ, they likewise know it. With the apostle Paul they say, 'I know whom I have believed'. 2 Tim. 1:12.

Finally, in verse 47 we are told of **HER HUMBLE CONFESSION**. Jesus knew that someone had touched him and why, because he knows everything. The disciples did not understand it. Following the enquiry of Jesus we read that this woman came and told him before all the people what had happened to her. I am happy with the way in which she told those present what Jesus had done for her. Luke 8:47 reads, 'she came trembling'. "Trembling", this is the word Paul used to describe the way he went to preach the gospel in Corinth. He said, 'I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling'. I Cor. 2. Humility, trembling is a feature of the life that has been transformed by the grace of God. We are also told in v.47 'she declared what Christ had done for her'. The believer should tell others what Christ has done for their souls. Romans 10:9. says, 'if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved'.

Finally, the opportunity to tell what Christ had done for her was made for her by the Saviour. This is the time to speak of Christ, when God gives you the opportunity. How sad it is that many believers let such opportunities pass without making full use of them.

Can you see yourself in this story? Have you come to Christ? Are you telling by life and lip what he has done for your soul?

Retracings and Renewings

DAVID A. DOUDNEY D.D.

Dr. Doudney was for a very long period Editor of the Gospel Magazine (1832-1893). In this article he describes how in God's providence he came to undertake this work.

It was while carrying on business at the City Press, that I became connected with The Gospel Magazine. I used to pass the old Publishing Office on my way to and from the City. Hearing of the death of the venerable Walter Row, who had conducted it for no less a period than twenty-four years, I casually called one morning to enquire about its future, when Miss Day (the daughter of the old Publisher) informed me that they had just disposed of it to the Rev. Bagnall Baker who was then a most popular minister, preaching to crowded congregations in a large Episcopal Chapel in the West End of London. Such, however, were his High Church sympathies that, in an interview with the old Editor a little before his death — when Mr. Baker proposed taking the conducting of the Magazine — Mr. Row upon ascertaining what his sentiments were, said very emphatically, “*You* conduct the Magazine? Why, if you had it, you would not retain it six months”. Singular to say, he had it but *five*! I then re-purchased the copyright of him at the exact price which he himself had paid for it, which is now nearly thirty five years ago. In the early part of our negotiations Mr. Baker made it a sine-qua-non that, in the event of our coming to terms — which, by the way, according to his first proposal, were three times the price he had paid — the Magazine should be conducted by a Clergyman of the Church of England. In agreeing to purchase I therefore intended to ask my early companion, dear John (who was then ordained) to conduct it. Mr. Baker, however, of his own accord, waived that condition and, in accepting my offer to take the Magazine at the same price he had paid for it, the editing it was to be an optional matter. When the purchase was concluded I said one day to dear George, “I have bought the copyright of the Gospel Magazine: what shall I do about the editing it?”. “Edit it yourself!” was his reply. I do not know that I had had such a thought until it was thus suggested by my now most devoted friend and companion.

Well do I, although at this distant day, remember the early Spring morning upon which I rose and, seated in our peaceful chamber in Bath Cottage, Hornsey Road, writing the opening Address. One clause in that Address is fresh in one's recollections, prone, as a rule, as one is, to

forget what one has written almost before the ink has dried. This is the clause to which I allude:

Lastly, we look within, and ask ourselves the question, "Can we venture to take up the pen they have laid down? To turn over the future pages of a Magazine they have left unturned?" And we should unhesitatingly reply in the negative, were not our hearts encouraged by such passages in God's Word as this, "He hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the mighty, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are". It matters not how weak the instrument, if God the Holy Ghost is but pleased to make use of it; and, simply looking up to Him for His divine teaching, we take this, our first step, in a path the difficulties and discouragements attendant on which He only fully knows. We contemplate many; but, hoping we have His sanction in the work in which we are about to be engaged, we look to Him for the fulfilment of His promises, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eyes". "Go, and I will be with thy mouth, and will teach thee what thou shalt say."

If I mistake not, it was on the forenoon of the day on which I wrote the Address of which the foregoing is an extract, that Mr. Baker himself called at my counting-house in Long Lane, Aldersgate Street. The negotiations had previously been carried on through his nephew. Knowing what his views were, I was the more anxious to deal very plainly with him. I therefore read him my Address, as expressing the principles upon which, with divine help, I purposed conducting the work. After hearing it he said, "As a Churchman, I could not have written it"; but, he added, "it will sell the Magazine". In a very recent perusal of the Editor's opening Address upon the commencement of a new series of the work in January, 1774, he expressed himself in similar language to that I was, so long afterwards, led to adopt, namely, to waive minor considerations as to Church and Dissent and to recognize as brethren and hold out the right hand of fellowship to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Poor Bagnall Baker! At the time I first heard him, so greatly was he followed, that (to use his own words) "he thought he might do anything with the people". However, upon the publication of his Catechism, in which he expressed his belief that all Dissenters were in the condemnation of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, his popularity immediately began to wane. The last I remember to have seen of him was on a sick bed. He was then Curate at St. George's in the Borough, and I had engaged to take his duty. For the last eight years in succession I have been permitted in that Church to plead on behalf of the Protestant Blind Society, but I can say that I believe I never stood in that pulpit without thinking more or less of its former most talented

occupant, and as I think of many years' successorship of poor Baker in contrast with his merely five month's editorship, I say within myself. "Who am I, and what is my father's house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto".

Not that I have the least ground whatever for pride or creature-boast in regard to my long connection with the Gospel Magazine. Apart from the immense weight and responsibility which it entails, especially in days like the present, I have the most humbling recollections of the dreadful rebellion of which I was the subject ere I had scarcely issued the first number. Such affliction came upon my family and such perplexity in business that I put it all down to the Magazine and I was ready to curse the day that I became acquainted with it. Oh the forbearance and longsuffering of my God! I have often been astounded that He has not cut me off as a cumberer of the ground even for the sins of my most holy things. I have no stones to cast at the greatest rebel or the vilest sinner that ever lived. They have sinned in ignorance, but I have sinned against light and knowledge, against the love and pity and the forbearance and longsuffering of a merciful and gracious God and Father in Christ Jesus. Hence the more closely I am brought in contact with the past or led by the Holy Ghost as the Remembrancer to retrace the leadings and the dealings of His wisdom and His love, the more am I lost in adoring wonder and amazement.

By reading the following extract from *The Gospel Magazine* for July 1840, you will at once see, in regard to my little day and its humble labours, those Scriptures have been verified, "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong", "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts".

"As implied by our motto at the opening of this Number, 'Faint. Yet pursuing,' as best bespeaking our present feelings, we would gladly have given place to some more able pen to have written our leading article; hence we have waited every post hoping for a suitable contribution: this not having arrived, time calls us to the duty. Since the appearance of our first Number we have been so shut up in our soul and the mind has been so dark that we have thought another Number of *The Gospel Magazine* would not issue from us and we heartily wish we had never put our hand to the work. But amidst all our exercises — and truly they are many and painful — we feel, that, having put our hand to the Gospel plough, we dare not look back. We look to it with reluctance but, having done so, and finding it glide smoothly and effectually, as it turned up the fallow ground before us, we thought the task much easier than we had imagined. We promised ourselves that "tomorrow should be as today, and much more abundant", and in the pride of our hearts we said, "Our next Number shall come forth like a little bark richly

frighted: our Pilot has condescended to smile and to assure us of much of His presence. By the skill of His hand we shall rise in triumph over every billow and weather every storm." Alas! Alas! the time of embarkation has arrived; we have got our little craft underweigh; our sails unfurled; our anchor heaved, and here we are tacking about, with wind and tide against us. We have no confidence in our own seamanship. Our course is beset with rocks and quicksands. Until our Pilot comes on board we dare not make sail. "Faint, yet pursuing."

From the foregoing quotation it may be seen that, when I took to the work, I had no idea of writing the leading article as a rule; this was quite an after-thought. However, through the good hand of my God upon me, I have been enabled to do it throughout my connection with the Magazine except in one case, and, with respect to that one omission I felt so rebuked by a circumstance which afterwards came to my knowledge as to make me most anxious never to repeat the omission. Moreover, I am so much the creature of habit, that if I once break through a rule, I am almost sure to do so again. The fact I was about to mention was this: there was a Christian woman in sick and dying circumstances. She had been blessed in reading the Magazine and, consequently, was anxious for its appearance. When the new Number came out she turned eagerly to the first article. "Oh!" said she in bitter disappointment, "there's no piece from the Editor this month". Then, after a pause, she added, "Perhaps I have looked too much to man". Coming to my knowledge as this case did so soon after my connection with the Magazine, it not only made me anxious not to subject others to a similar disappointment, but more particularly it created in my heart a certain fear, and I trust godly jealousy, of undue importance being attached to the creature, for I am quite sure that when this is the case that creature will either be removed or his labours rendered of no value. I can, with the utmost truth say that the disappointment expressed by that poor dying woman has been of great service to me throughout my editorial and ministerial course.

Although, as already shown, I had my exercises and anxieties about the work I had just undertaken, still, at the same time, I was not without my encouragements. I had various letters from entire strangers of the most grateful and refreshing character. The most remarkable instance, however, as that of my own dear wife. She deeply regretted my having anything to do with the Magazine. She reminded me that I had just lost a large sum by a work that I had brought out against Popery and she now feared similar results. I said in reply that I had made a certain offer and that I could not draw back. Within four or five months of my undertaking the editorship it pleased the Lord to lay His afflictive hand upon my wife and then upon my three remaining

children. Two of these He took to Himself ten weeks before He called her home but, during her illness on one occasion she said, "I was so opposed to your taking that Magazine, but now what you write so comes home that, in my present state, it is too much for me; I am obliged to lay it down before I can go on with the reading of it".

For the encouragement of any whose future may seem dark and to whom nothing, according to appearance is promising, who would have supposed that in two years afterwards the young man who passed through that Court at the back of Fleet Street with downcast eye and burdened heart, picking up that precious fragment of God's blessed Word as he walked, would enter upon his happy matrimonial life in that very Fleet Street?*

As a further inducement to "hope against hope" in the face of the most adverse circumstances and in spite of the greatest possible improbabilities, to what conclusion would any reasonable person have come, if so be a passer-by had whispered into that dejected young man's ear, "Don't be discouraged; you'll *preach* some day in that church over the way"? Would not such an intimation have been deemed the very height of absurdity? Notwithstanding, in God's time and in God's way it came to pass. Some forty years afterwards I preached at St. Bride's Church, Fleet Street, on behalf of the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society.

I speak these simple facts, not for the purpose of calling attention to the creature, God knoweth! but with a view to His glory, and with an ardent wish to stimulate the reader to "acknowledge Him in all his ways, that He may direct his paths", yea, that in all respects, he may "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness", having the promise, "And all these things shall be added unto you".

Make you His service your delight
Your wants shall be His care."

"Let not thy heart despond and say
'How shall I stand the trying day?'
He has engaged by firm decree,
That as thy days thy strength shall be."

*Extract from his diary above referred to.

"June 26th 1832. It is but few days in which I am not exercised in some way or other. Today my spirits have been very very low; my heart sank within me and as I walked home to dinner my soul was in agony. I could freely have welcomed death for it would, I thought, relieve me. My uncle and aunt's conversation did however, in some measure do this whilst they assured me of its having been their experience but that they

had now found peace and comfort. As I was returning to the office, I saw a part of a Bible lying on the ground in a Court through which I had to pass. I picked it up and the first words I saw were, "For I am with thee and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee." "This," thought I "dear Lord, is all I want. If I can but realise Thy presence, then I shall have naught to fear; then I shall not fear to venture into life. Oh that it may be so and, though the future is withheld from my view, and is very dark and obscure, yet may I again find what I have found in past circumstances — that:

"He'll raise my spirit when it faints,
And far exceed my hope."

(Although so many years have passed away since, yet how fresh are the foregoing facts in my remembrance and how am I humbled before God — yea in the very dust — when I think of them. When I reflect upon what He has been and what He has done between that time and the present, I cry, "Shame, Shame!" to myself that I should ever even for a moment doubt His goodness, His wisdom, or His love and faithfulness, for the little residue of my days on earth. Oh! how vile, how hateful, how God-dishonouring is unbelief and ingratitude!)

God's Good Providence

Robert Hawker

"For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." Philippians 1, 19.

Blessed frame of mind when, like Paul, however unpromising circumstances are, to be able to say, I know that this exercise, be it what it may, is among the "all things which work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose." My soul, do thou once for all, mark down this one certain and never-to-be-questioned truth that thy God, thy Jesus hath but one end in view from all the providences He appoints to His people, and is invariably and everlastingly promoting it, however to thy apprehension at times things seem to run counter. And when thou hast settled this in thy mind as a certain fixed principle, next take into account all, or (at least as thou canst not know all) some of the many foundations on which the certainty for the accomplishment of a final issue of good to the people of God, rests.

Think of the ability, power, wisdom and purpose of thy Lord. Call to mind the grace, the love, the fixed affection Jesus bears and from everlasting hath always borne to His people. Then recollect the plentiful means in His own almighty hand which He hath to make all purposes minister to His will, and all creatures to become instruments of His pleasure. And when thou hast studied, and well studied these blessed things in Christ's school under the supply of the Spirit's teaching, make application of the doctrine to every event in the dispensations of thy Lord's providence and grace which thou meetest with through life.

Art thou afflicted in soul, in sickness of body, in want or weakness, with inward trials or outward evils, tempted by sin or tempted by Satan? Jesus knows all, appoints all, is carrying thee through all, and will finally bless thee in all. The enjoyment of ordinances, or interruption of ordinances, heart-straitenings in prayer or enlargement in prayer; in short, all things past, present and future; all circumstances, times and occasions, the blessings of heaven, yea, the very malice of hell, Jesus will overrule, arrange, direct and order, that, like the hidden springs of a machine, a beautiful design is in the whole, and not a pin could be left out without injury to the work. Learn these things, my soul, and get through grace into the practical use of these lessons, and then thou wilt be able to say and with the same degree of assurance as Paul did, let thy trials be what they may, under every one of them, "I know that this shall turn to my salvation, through the prayer of the faithful, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

In the image of God

JOHN LEGG (Northallerton)

Christians today are faced by many ethical issues demanding a clear response and resolute action. Too often we produce merely an emotional reaction, possibly backed up by one or two proof-texts. A deeper, wider and firmer foundation is to be found in the doctrine of the image of God. This is stated in Genesis 1:26-27. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion" etc. Later, in Genesis 9:6, the doctrine is quoted as the reason behind God's instructions to Noah: "For in the image of God made he man." A consideration of this section should provide us with some guidelines to help us to find our way through the current ethical maze.

1. Man is unique

In the previous verses of the chapter man is assumed to be different from and superior to the animals: "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered." v.2. The reason given for this. (v.6b seems to be linked with all that precedes, not just the first half of the verse) is that man is made in the image of God. This is not the place to enter into the details of this doctrine, but it clearly speaks of the dignity and privilege of one who was created to have communion with God and to rule over the rest of creation as the Lord's representative.

We must, therefore, assert, over against the theory of evolution, that man is not just another animal, even the highest of the animals, but different in kind. The relevance of this to our present subject is that man must both behave and be treated in a manner which befits this high status. If we are told, as we are constantly, that we are just animals, then we shall begin to behave like animals and treat one another accordingly. We are seeing the outworking of this at the present time in the spheres of medical ethics and law, as well as in the ordinary life of men and women. We can trace some of the implications of the biblical teaching in the passage we are considering.

2. Man's life must be protected.

Unlike the animals, which v.3 tells us may be (now) used for food, man is not to be killed; on the contrary man is under the special protection of God who will require his blood from man and beast, i.e. we are answerable to God for the life of man. Once again man is seen to be on a different level from the animals, so, while this in no way justifies cruelty to animals, turning dominion into tyranny, we must be careful not to treat animals as if they were people, e.g. sacrificing the passengers in a car to avoid killing a cat or risking a father's life to rescue a pet from the river. The greater danger, however, is not that of treating animals as people, but of treating people as animals.

The first sign of danger is when people — scientists, doctors, social workers, theologians or relatives — begin to say things like, "They're not really people, of course," or talk about the "quality of life" and refer to "cabbages". A foetus (not a baby) is "not really a person" so abortion is permissible; a spina bifida baby will only have a very low "quality of life" so it should not be treated and its death hastened, out of compassion, naturally! A senile old lady is "nothing more than a cabbage" so euthanasia is only kind etc. Dr. Francis Schaeffer has reminded us that a first step towards Hitler's final solution for the Jews

was to define them as non-persons and that in the 18th century slaves were not regarded as people.

In contrast with all this, the bible asserts that man's life is to be preserved and protected. We must not kill (murder); we must not harm our neighbour, Romans 13:10; we must not commit murder in our hearts by hating or by cursing those made in the image of God, James 3:9-10. We must not stop there, even, but stress the positive also. Everyone must be treated with the positive respect and care due to one created in the likeness of God. If we refuse abortion then we must be ready to give as much help as possible to overburdened or unmarried mothers. (Organisations such as "Life" do this by providing homes, etc; joining "Life" and especially "Evangelicals in Life", 7 Parade, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, is a good practical way of honouring God's image in man.) If we refuse to kill off the handicapped, then parents with handicapped children must be given all necessary support. Old folk must be cared for and enabled to die with dignity. In our dealings with all men, we must remember their status in God's eyes and treat them accordingly, however despised, dirty or degraded. "The sanctity of life" must not be a mere catch-phrase.

3. Man's death must be avenged.

The same principle which demands that life be preserved in most situations, in another requires that life be forfeited, such is the dignity of man. Execution for murder is both right and necessary if the land is not to be defiled, Deut. 19:11-13, and the reason is given here in v.6: "For in the image of God made he man". We must, of course, exercise great care at this point. While the idea of capital punishment as a deterrent is perfectly valid as a second aim and function, it is utterly immoral to make it our first or sole justification for the death penalty. Murder is a crime and a sin "worthy of death", Deut. 21:22, because of the nature of man. The murderer *deserves* to die. (Incidentally there are many biblical safeguards along these lines; see Deut. 19:4-6).

This is justice, not mere human revenge, descending to the murderer's own level, as sometimes alleged (as also in debates over corporal punishment). The "avenger of blood" in the Old Testament was as much a "minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil", as are "the powers that be" in the New and today. In fact, one of the aims of having divine vengeance exercised in this judicial manner is to remove from men any excuse for taking their own sinful revenge. (See the sequence of Romans 12:19-21 forbidding revenge followed by 13: 1-5 explaining God's ordinance of justice.) When justice is not done or not seen to be done, then men are tempted wrongly to take the law into their own hands. In such cases some, (but

only some), of the guilt lies with those who have not followed God's requirements,

Once again, however, we must be careful to ensure that we do not slip into emotional and sinful desires for revenge under the guise of zeal for God's law. We must always remember that we, too, are sinners, James 4:12, and that the reason for such dreadful punishment is not our outraged feelings but the image of God.

4. Man's life can be renewed.

The commands of vv. 1,7. renew the mandate of chapter 1, to be fruitful and multiply, thus reminding us of God's original purpose for man, to live for ever. If, then man's physical life must be protected and his physical death avenged, how much more must we seek the redemption of his forfeited life and the renewal of his spiritual life in "the image of him who created him", Col. 3:10 Indeed, in this very context we find that this was in the mind of God. Not only has the Lord preserved the life of Noah and his family, but he also promises to preserve the earth from flood in the future. 2 Peter 3: 9 tells us that God's purpose in this is to give time for repentance. We have another clue to this, in the light of later revelation, in v.4. The regulation about not eating flesh with the blood points forward to later instructions based on the use of blood in sacrifice and these, in turn, foreshadow the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the express image of God's person, who thus ransomed man's forfeited life.

It is man's indelible awareness of being made in the image of God, (however differently he might phrase it!) which provides a point of contact for the gospel. Whatever he may assert, he knows that he is not just another animal and this consciousness is frequently used by the Holy Spirit to lead men to Christ.

Thus the same principle, which demands execution, also requires positive respect, care and even love for all created in God's image. And further, the same doctrines which calls for our concern for men's bodies and minds, gives us not only responsibility but also hope and encouragement to seek the good of their souls.

The First Epistle of John

A. V. McCANDLISH (Minehead)

Fellowship with God means fulness of joy, 1 John 1:1-4.

John is writing here to those who have professed faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a most intimate family letter as from a father to his own dear children. He addresses them in such terms repeatedly, see chapter 2:1,12,18.

He begins his letter by unveiling the glory of our Lord Jesus:- *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.”* 1:1,2.

John had made the very same statements in his gospel. Jn. 1:1,2,4,14. He says Jesus was in the beginning, that is before time was. He was God, and He came into the world as man, so that He became God manifest in the flesh. Here in verse 1, he wrote, *“which we have looked upon”*, he uses the same word as beheld, in Jn. 1:14, *“We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* It means we gazed on Him with a long searching look, in order to grasp the meaning, and significance of His person. He recognised Jesus as the Eternal Son of God.

After this introduction he sets forth his object in writing this letter to them:- *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”* v.3.

It would seem that these believers in our Lord Jesus, had not entered fully into the experience of fellowship with the Father, and the Lord Jesus. They did know the truth, 1 Jn. 2:21. Clearly they had an experience of conviction of sin, and they believed that the Lord Jesus died as a propitiation for their sins, 2:2. They had been moved by the Holy Spirit, and acknowledged Jesus as their own personal Saviour and Lord, so they knew their sins were forgiven, 1 Jn. 2:12. They were born again of the Holy Spirit, 1 Jn. 3:1, and they had received the gift of eternal life. 1 Jn. 5:13. They must therefore have had some experience of fellowship with God, for Jesus had said, *“This is life eternal that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent”*. Jn. 17:3. Clearly their fellowship was not all that God intended, hence the writing of this letter. *“I am writing this, that ye also*

may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." I believe this is a very common failing among Christians. Paul found it necessary to write to Timothy, when he was the pastor of the church in Ephesus, "Lay hold on eternal life." 1 Tim. 6;12. Many of us Christians would say, we believe on the Lord Jesus as our own personal Saviour, we are born again of the Holy Spirit, and are the children of God. We say that Christ lives in us and that we have received the gift of eternal life; but how much real fellowship do we have with the Father and the Son? We worship, and partake of the Lord's Supper; we pray, we do seek to serve Him. We are sure that He will never leave us, and will keep us safe, and at death He will take us home to be with Him in heaven.

May I be very personal and ask, how much real fellowship do you have in the course of the day with the Father, and with the Lord Jesus? John began this letter by speaking of the fellowship that he and the other disciples had with the Lord Jesus. He said, they saw Him, they heard Him speak, they touched Him, and He touched them. They lived in His company, they ate and drank with Him. At times He rebuked them for their unbelief. They received power from Him to do the work He gave them to do. They shared their lives with Him. Do you really know anything of such a fellowship as this? We cannot see Him with our earthly eyes as John did, but we can see Him with the eye of faith.

We cannot feel Him, but we can touch Him by faith, and we can know when He touches us. We ought to know Him just as truly as we know our parents and friends. If we have eternal life we can live in His presence just as the disciples lived in the company of Jesus. The greatest experience possible to man is to have this fellowship with God, and the Lord Jesus. We can walk with God just as Enoch did. We can have the same fellowship with the Lord Jesus, and live in His presence as the disciples did. We are members of His body Eph. 5;30; so we can be His hands to minister to others for Him. We can be His feet to run His errands, and His mouth to speak His words to others. We are called to be His deputies wherever we go, and in all that we do. This is God's plan for us: not to be in conscious communion with Him, only when we have our quiet times, or when we worship, or serve Him in the work of the gospel; but all through every day, in the ordinary work of the home or in our business life.

See how John continues, "*And these things write we unto you that your joy might be full.*" v.4.

What exactly does He mean by fulness of joy? Surely He means joy that is perfect, and so complete that nothing more can be added to

increase it. Have you ever met anyone who has this fulness of joy? We can all think of things that will increase our joy. This is the joy that we shall have in heaven, and it consists in perfect unbroken fellowship with God, and the Lord Jesus. There we shall live in the full consciousness of His presence, we shall see His face, and hear His voice, and we shall only do His will. It will be a condition of perfect bliss, "In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Ps. 16;11; What John is saying here, is that we may have this experience of fulness of joy now, in exact proportion to the measure of our fellowship with God, and the Lord Jesus. If we limit our conscious communion to our times of Bible study, prayer, worship, and of direct service to God in the work of the gospel; then the joy is intermittent. We are invited to share every experience of the day with our Lord, wakening morning by morning to hand ourselves over to Him, asking Him to make the plans for the day, recognising His presence at meal times, seeking in all our conversation only to speak as in His presence, accepting as His will for us the mundane tasks of the kitchen or the factory, and doing them for His glory; then we shall experience times of heaven upon earth, just as much as when we are remembering Him in the Lord's Supper.

We shall still experience times of pressure, when burdens press heavily upon us; but if these are shared with the Lord, and we remember that we are yoked to Christ, we shall find rest to our souls. No doubt we shall have times of severe pain, weakness and helplessness; but as we hand them all over to Him, they become times of spiritual enrichment. In our times of sorrow, as we seek to cast ourselves into the arms of our Lord, we know the unspeakable comfort of His love, as "one whom his mother comforteth." Isa. 66;13. No experience that can come to us can take anything away from this fulness of joy, if it is yielded to Him. It is only when we turn away from Him to some other thing, or to consider ourselves, that we lose this joy. This communion with God is the greatest experience possible to man; so Satan directs all his efforts and cunning to interfere with it; and oh how often he succeeds. This is why Paul wrote to Timothy, "Lay hold on eternal life". Let us seek to keep our eyes constantly upon our Lord whatever we are doing. "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net." Ps 25;15. These things write we unto you, that your joy might be full. This *is* the joy of heaven, and consists entirely in fellowship with the Lord. It is quite different from earthly joy, which is the pleasure we get from earthly things and earthly friends and earthly activities. As long as we are in the body it is natural to desire these earthly joys; but if they are not shared with our Lord, then they become snares to interrupt our communion with Him.

May we learn that fellowship with God and our Lord Jesus is the most precious experience we can have, and may the Holy Spirit lead us to seek it in everything.

Assurance

ADOLPHE SAPHIR

What is meant by full assurance of faith? Nothing else but faith in full vigorous exercise. What is faith? Not faith in our having faith, in our being accepted, but faith that we have a right of access, that Jesus is the living Way and that He is the High Priest in the holy of Holies. The object of faith, of the weakest and smallest spark of faith, as much as of faith in plenitude, or full assurance is not in ourselves, but Christ in His Person and work. That which I am to be fully assured about, on which my faith is to rest clearly and firmly is Christ and what He is and has done for sinners. Hence when timid hearts say, "I cannot draw near with full assurance of faith because I do not know that I have truly taken hold of Christ," the answer is, "You are to draw near in full assurance of faith in Christ." It is not, seeing, therefore, we have evidence that we have been truly converted and renewed; let us in full confidence of our possessing true faith draw near; *but*, seeing we have received right of access by the blood of Christ and that He is our High Priest over God's House, let us exercise full trust in His glorious Person and His finished work. Christ alone is the object of faith from beginning to end. Of Him we are to be perfectly sure, and then trust ourselves to this firm foundation. We are called to exercise faith, but we are not called to look *in* on faith as a condition; we are called to exercise faith in looking *out* on the unmixed promise of God, which yet can be received only by believing. "Therefore," the Apostle says at the end of his life, "I know WHOM I have believed". From his conversion to his last moment, he trusted as a poor sinner in Jesus.

Clearly and vividly as his conversion must have stood before his mind, indelible as must have been the impression of the heavenly vision, yet he was never tempted to substitute the reminiscence of grace received for the personal and loving Saviour, for the new and living Way by which we constantly come to God. Hence, when the disciples saw Jesus's feet and hands, they rejoiced, for all doubt was removed. The eye does not see itself; faith is not to stand on itself; your full

assurance is to be that Christ's blood is precious and that He has entered as the Forerunner. Then you are at peace.

Faith means trust, reliance, confidence, leaning. There is no other worthy of trust, none else reliable but Jesus. But if you wish to have an additional object of faith in your progress and spirituality, you are, like Peter, looking away from Jesus unto the unstable sea.

Nor have I any other proof of my faith's genuineness yesterday, but by my exercising faith this moment. It is an ever present tense, "He that believeth hath eternal life." But, alas! some who speak of not being sure of salvation, and wish to be persuaded not so much into assurance as comfort, have most likely never had any dealings with God. They wish for deliverance from sorrow and punishment. They would like not so much to be brought nigh to God but rather to have a title deed promising that they are and must be unfailingly saved! This would be salvation without God. This be far from us. God is our salvation. Our souls thirst for the living God. We draw near in full assurance of faith, for Jesus died and rose again and sitteth on the right hand of God. *We must and are safe.* Nay, while we are afraid, like the Psalmist, we will put our trust in Him. The feet may tremble, but the Rock on which they are set standeth firm and immovable. Be not discouraged that you need the constant exercise of faith, as if this argued you are not already accepted. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, *by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.*"

From the Gospel Magazine 1895.

"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble".

BARTON BOUCHIER

Psalm 20.

A sweeter wish, or more consolatory prayer for a child of sorrow, was never uttered by man: "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee". Who is there of the sons of men to whom a day of trouble does not come, whose path is not darkened at times? Few plants have both the morning and the evening sun. The book of Job tells us that man is born to trouble. A day of trouble is the heritage of every child of Adam; how sweet then the wish "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble". It is the prayer of

another on behalf of some troubled one, and yet it implies that the troubled one himself had also prayed "The Lord hear thee"—hear and answer your prayer.

Who is it that here offers this wish on behalf of one in anguish of heart, and whose petition is it that the Lord is besought to hear? The words are Davids words, but the prayer is the prayer of all God's church. The desire is addressed to no other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. He indeed had a day of trouble, "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of trouble clouds and of thick darkness" when the Lord hid as it were his face from him and made as though He heard Him not. Gethsemane witnessed a day of trouble such as heaven never looked down upon before nor since. Even in that garden on that night of trouble, there must have been other prayers than for the removal of that cup of bitterness; amid the strong crying and tears which those hours of anguish heard and witnessed, there must have been earnest supplications on behalf of His ransomed church to the end of time. He was heard in that He prayed: the Lord sent Him help from His sanctuary and strengthened Him out of Zion. An angel from heaven, from God's own sanctuary, from the heavenly Zion, appeared unto Him, strengthening Him.

Book Reviews

Stand Firm. Peter Jeffrey. Evangelical Press of Wales. Pp 72. £1.25.

This is a very attractive guide for young Christians to the armour of God as Paul described it in Ephesians chapter six. There is a helpful chapter on each facet of the Christian warfare, and the armour. Each chapter contains a solid quotation from a well known Christian teacher — among them, Boice, Matthew Henry, D. M. Lloyd-Jones, J. I. Packer, J. C. Ryle, C. H. Spurgeon, A. W. Tozer and A. W. Pink. There is a useful table of the books from which these quotes are taken, so that young readers may follow up in due course, with deeper studies. English churchmen will be pleased to see the name of J. C. Ryle receiving due notice again in Wales! Oddly enough the quotes from books by Luther, Calvin, & Adolph Saphir are not followed up in this list. This book is a worthy and commendable successor to Mr Jeffrey's earlier booklets for new Christians.

W.J.P.

Letters of Samuel Rutherford. Banner of Truth Trust. Pp. 744. £7.95.

This is a truly delightful book both in its appearance and not least in its contents.

Both John Bunyan and Samuel Rutherford made their outstanding contribution to posterity while suffering imprisonment because of their fidelity to Christ. Rutherford's persecutors intended to silence him for ever but instead they only extended his ministry for centuries to come.

In all there are 345 letters here — prefaced by helpful notes on the person to whom Rutherford is writing. The book has a very full index and a further index of special subjects. Many will be glad of the glossary to shed light on some Scottish and some obsolete words.

The Letters selected by Andrew Bonar are introduced by an interesting sketch of Rutherford's life along with black and white illustrations of scenes connected with his ministry. Spurgeon held the Letters in high esteem and wrote "when we are dead and gone let the world know that Spurgeon held Rutherford's Letters to be the nearest thing to inspiration which can be found in all the writings of mere men".

The Banner of Truth Trust have done a great service in making the Letters of Samuel Rutherford once more available. The book is well worth the price and will prove a spiritual investment.

M.H.

By God's Grace Alone, prepared by H. J. Appleby; 73pp., Grace Publications; £1.35.

Grace Publications continue their series of Christian Classics, abridged and in easy to read English, with this classic of Abraham Booth, Pastor of the Particular Baptist Church in Little Prescot Street, London, 1769 to 1805. I must confess, that I have not read the original by Booth, but can't help feeling that depth, potency, and pithyness must have been lost in the transformation. Is eighteenth century English so difficult to grasp as to necessitate a modern rendering? It must be added that Christian classics are much more readily available than they were at one time, so it really is difficult to justify this kind of venture on the ground of lack of access to the originals. There might of course be a place for books of this kind to help young Christians into the deeper things of the faith, but even then we should surely be encouraging young Christians to read from our tremendous heritage of classical Christian literature as soon as possible. One does not doubt that Mr. Appleby has made a sound job of this rendering, nor that Grace Publications have brought out this series with the best of intentions, but in truth, how much is gained by such a venture?

P.S.H.A.

Eve's Story. Eric and Joyce Lane. Evangelical Press. Pp. 248. £1.95.

Subtitled 'A true to life story of one Christian woman's search for fulness and equality', the authors have taken Eve, an imaginary Christian woman, now a widow who looks back over her life's experiences. The book is soundly biblically based, and follows Eve's search to know God's role for a woman, in the church, the family and society. It is a book which is not afraid to take hold of some very thorny subjects, on which evangelical Christians will vary, and seek the biblical answers. Be warned however, that there are some conclusions that many will not agree with, as my wife and I found to be the case ourselves. Having said that, Eve's Story does in general take the conservative position, inasmuch as it makes it quite clear that the woman's role in the church and family is one of submission etc. In truth, could anyone write a book on an area as controversial as this, without drawing some conclusions which Christians will vary on. In conclusion, we would commend this book as an excellent tool for making Christians think through and sort out what they believe in this area. Perhaps not to be recommended for young Christians who have not developed discernment, but a book which many individuals, married couples, and churches should find useful.

P.S.H. & J.A.

The Attraction of the Cross, Gardiner Spring, Banner of Truth, 344pp., £4.95.

Gardiner Spring was an outstanding American preacher in the 19th century who is best known perhaps for his volume *The Distinguishing Traits of Christian Character*. Although trained in Law he also trained in Theology at Andover Theological Seminary and was for 62 years pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City.

In this volume Spring concentrated upon the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and produced a masterly exposition of that fundamental theme. In 22 chapters he looked at the Cross from various angles such as The Truth of the Cross, The Actual Purpose of the Cross, The Cross a Completed Justification and The Holiness of the Cross etc. As a result, the reader may certainly feel the Attraction of the Cross for there is a drawing power in the Gospel that is present in no other message and is found in no other faith. Says Gardiner Spring: "Other events there have been of mighty interest; but this outweighs them all. Distinguished in the counsels of heaven above all other scenes ever beheld by angels or men, this tragical event is destined to awaken the attention of a slumbering world" (p. 13).

This volume is distinguished by several factors the most important of

which is its contents. Here one is at the heart of the Gospel and as the author exults in the Cross of Christ he allows Scripture to speak for itself. Over and over again passages of Scripture apposite to the central theme are quoted and one is enabled to appreciate afresh the unity of the Word especially as it relates to this fundamental truth.

Secondly, the author brought all his considerable powers of expression to bear upon his theme. Here was a workman who needed not to be ashamed! He was eloquent but not flowery and precise without being obscure. Indeed, in his attention to style and presentation he reminds one of W.G.T. Shedd.

Interestingly, on page 80, Spring quotes approvingly from the works of Dr. M. Mason and the language employed sounds almost as though it were taken from *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*. The subject is "The Warrant of Faith" and here it is grounded upon the free offer of Christ to us in the Gospel. This in turn is made to rest upon God's grant of His Son Jesus Christ to a lost and perishing world. We may say, then, that Gardiner Spring was an American Marrow-man!

The volume is beautifully produced and inexpensively priced. The date 1880 in the publisher's blurb is obviously wrong but this is a small flaw in an otherwise excellent publication.

R.R.

THROUGHOUT THE CENTURY

The English Churchman and The Gospel Magazine

have been closely associated in testimony to the Scriptural principles of the Reformation, and the Doctrines of Grace as set out in XXXIX Articles.

THE ENGLISH CHURCHMAN is a fortnightly journal of news, comment, correspondence, book reviews and articles.

15p per issue; £7.30p per year, post paid. Abroad £3.90p plus postage.

Be informed!

A splendid gift to a friend in 1985.

Send for a free copy.

English Churchman, PO Box 217, London, SE5 8NP.

SECRETARIAL NOTES

It is a positive saving in time and expense for our small office administration when readers remit subscriptions without our need to send "subscription due" reminder letters. Where payment is made in currencies other than sterling please add 25% to the above subscription rate in order to assist in meeting the negotiation charges made by the bank on all Commonwealth and foreign transactions, including Eire currency.

We would ask readers **kindly to inform us** if they do not wish to continue to receive The Gospel Magazine.

The Trustees are most grateful for the generous gifts of numerous readers over and above their subscription, which enables the price to be kept to a minimum.

Bound annual volumes. We would welcome inquiries for bound volumes. **Old bound volumes** of which readers may be willing to dispose of are sought in order to fill a few gaps in the Trustees' own set; and also to build up a duplicate set. Please write to the Editor, or the Hon. Secretary. We have recently obtained two volumes we have long sought for. We now need the volume for 1809. Can anyone help?

Church and chapel groups. We already have long-established groups of readers in various parts of the UK., and overseas. We would like to increase the number of church and chapel groups. Would local friends kindly promote this, and thus help to extend the ministry of The Gospel Magazine?

Charles Elphick Limited. Once again readers will wish to join with the Trustees to express their sincere appreciation to the printers for their unfailing courtesy, fine production, and prompt issues of *The Gospel Magazine* throughout the past year.

MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION FORM

To The Gospel Magazine, Rev. Gordon Hill, Hon. Secretary, 34 Morley Road, Sheringham, Norfolk NR26 8JE or The Gospel Magazine, P.O. Box 217, London SE5 8NP.

We would be obliged if established readers whose subscriptions are now due would make use of this form. Please inform us of any change of address. Kindly renew your subscription in good time.

Subscriber's name.....

Address

..... Post-code

No. of copies to be sent per issue..... Sum enclosed.....

Date of sending subscription.....

A year's subscription to *The Gospel Magazine* would make a suitable gift.

Post paid subscription for 1985 (six issues p.a.) is £2.50 p.a. Cheques and P.O.s. should be made payable to The Gospel Magazine.

MINISTRY

BUXTON, Derbyshire. Trinity Church (Hardwick Mount). Sundays 11 am and 6.30 pm. Simple Prayer Book services and Bible ministry. Rev. Maurice Handford.

On holiday in **EASTBOURNE**? Worship at Cavendish Place Chapel; Evangelical—Independent; Sundays: 11 & 6.30; Tuesdays 7.15. Visiting Ministers.

SOUTHBOROUGH, Nr. **TUNBRIDGE WELLS**, Bethel Chapel, Western Road. Evangelical & Reformed Services. Sunday 11.00 am and 6.00 pm. Thursday 7.30 pm. Pastor: John Gosden. Tel: Tunbridge Wells 35491.

WATTISHAM CHAPEL. Suffolk. Evangelical and Reformed Services each **LORD'S DAY** 10.45: 2.30: 6.30. Metrical Psalms and hymns. A.V. only used. Minister's telephone Bildeston 740236.

APPEAL

BLUNHAM, BEDS., Strict Baptist Chapel, founded 1842, needing urgent repairs, estimated cost £10,000. Donations much appreciated by deacon: Mr. Joseph Green, 102A Green End, Great Barford, Beds., MK4 3HJ.

The hope of holding subscription rates at a reduced level when paid in United States dollars has been disappointed. This is due to the *doubling* of bank commission on cheque negotiations. We therefore have to return to **6 dollars 50 cents, post paid, for The Gospel Magazine for 1985**. We shall, of course, honour the subscriptions of those who have paid only 5 dollars, (as advertised in our last two issues).

PUBLICATIONS

THE TENDER GRAPE: A monthly magazine designed to interest children in the Scriptures that are able to make them wise unto salvation. Annual subscription £3.30p from The Editor, 82 High Street, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey, GU21 2PZ.

ADVERTISEMENT RATES

Full page £17, Half page £9,

Quarter page £4.50.

7p per word for classified advertisements.

Box number 15p extra.

Advertisements should be received by the 1st of the month prior to publication, and addressed to: The Gospel Magazine, Rev. Gordon Hill, Hon. Secretary, 34 Morley Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8JE. Tel: Sheringham 824965.

Classified advertisements should be accompanied by payment. Please state if a receipt is required. The enclosure of an s.a.e. would be appreciated. We reserve the right to decline any advertisement.

Cheques should be made payable to **THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE**.

HOLIDAYS

SOUTHWOLD. Convenient family house one minute from the beach in this lovely little Suffolk town. Details: Hill, 34 Morley Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8JE. Tel. Sheringham 824965.

ULLAPOOL area. N.W. Highlands. Privately situated house in peaceful surroundings. Central for touring. Three miles from sea. Lord's Day must be respected.—Mrs. I. Renwick, Inverbroom, Lochbroom, Ross-shire. Tel: 085 485 209.