

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

Editor

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Editorial

FAINT NOT

HAVE YOU NOTICED how often these words occur in Scripture? The Lord Jesus Christ, for instance, says that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1. He commends the Church at Ephesus because they laboured for His sake and had not fainted (Revelation 2:3).

Here is a word we shall do well to note. The pressures of life are tremendous and they take their toll; our own resources are quite inadequate. However, provision has been made for the believer, who is urged to "wait upon the Lord". Though youths unaided may faint, the Christian will have his strength renewed (Isaiah 40:30-31).

When God deals with us and corrects our wayward tendencies we are not to become bitter, developing a grudge. Rather we are to fix our minds on Christ, "lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Hebrews 12:3).

With regard to Christian service, the Bible says: "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." There is in all of us the tendency to tire and flag. We need vigorously to resist the temptation to give up. We must not expect Christian work always to be straightforward and encouraging; there are sure to be disappointments to contend with.

The Apostle encouraged his own soul, as well as those at Corinth in these words: "As we have received mercy, we faint not." Amid overwhelming difficulties and discouragements, he persevered, and so by grace can we.

“Luke, the Beloved Physician”

A Sermon by the Editor

*“Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you”
(Colossians 4:14)*

LUKE IS ONLY MENTIONED by name three times in the whole of the New Testament; here in our text, in 2 Timothy 4:11, where Paul says, “Only Luke is with me”, and in the Letter to Philemon, verse 24, where he speaks of Luke as “my fellow-labourer”. But Luke was a companion of the Apostle Paul, both in work and in prison. It seems that he possibly joined Paul at Troas, of which we read in Acts 16:8, because that is the first of what are the autobiographical sections of the Acts of the Apostles. Luke joined the Apostle, no doubt, as his physician because Paul had a malady; he spoke of the “thorn in the flesh”, so he was his physician as well as a fellow-worker. He continued with the Apostle Paul over many years. He went, for instance, with Paul **up** to Jerusalem, and we get that rather graphic phrase in Acts 21:15 where Luke says, “we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem”, but he was not afraid even to go to Rome with the Apostle Paul, and there at the end of the Acts of the Apostles, having survived that tremendous shipwreck (and what an experience that must have been!), Luke records in Acts 28:30: “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him.”

Concerning Luke's nationality we are not certain; **he was possibly of** Palestinian ancestry — maybe a Jew of the Dispersion. Tradition says he was a native of Antioch in Syria, and this is possible because Luke goes into great detail concerning the founding of the Christian Church in Antioch and the establishment of the Gospel in that place. But Godet, the commentator, says that Luke was possibly one of the two disciples who went to Emmaus on the first Easter Day. Again, this is possible, because that beautiful incident is recounted in such great detail. But the Christian Church is tremendously indebted to Luke, not only for his missionary endeavours as the companion of Paul, but for his literary labours as the writer of the third Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles.

Let us look at this great man, of whom Paul says he is “Luke, the beloved physician”. We find, for one thing, that **he was a very accomplished personality**, undoubtedly one of the best educated men of his day. From the very beginning of the Christian era, the Gospel has attracted the most learned as well as the very simple-hearted. They have all found their unity in Christ. What a close observer Luke really was! If you turn to the beginning of his Gospel (1:3), he says he “had perfect understanding of all things from the very first”. He takes us into his confidence as to why he sits down to write his Gospel. He says he was dissatisfied with the attempts of others to recount the life and times of Christ. Luke **does not**

give that which costs nothing. He did not put pen to paper until innumerable journeys were made and until he had gathered together all the available material. He spared neither time nor trouble for his work; he investigated all the relevant facts and so when we read his Gospel we have the result of diligent research, exhaustive enquiry, scrupulous accuracy and an orderly presentation; "having that perfect knowledge of all things from the very first".

Another thing that strikes us is this, that *he was a self-effacing writer*. He never mentions his own name and he only refers to himself in the Preface, both to his Gospel and to the Acts of the Apostles; and, in the autobiographical section of the Acts, he uses the plural and not the singular. He is a humble and disciplined writer who keeps himself in the background and lets all the light shine on his great theme — the Saviour of men. Today, names count for everything, but how we need the self-effacing quality as it is exhibited in Luke, the beloved physician. He could testify of Christ and keep himself well hidden in the background.

Also, Luke excelled in what we might call three Firsts. He was *the first medical missionary* — "Luke, the beloved physician." Luke, in a very real sense, is a pioneer of a host of dedicated men and women who have devoted their medical knowledge and skill to the alleviation of the under-privileged people of the world.

Now the great Apostle Paul, who spent his days ministering to the souls of men, makes honourable mention of one who ministered to men's bodies — "Luke, the beloved physician" — and when you take up his Gospel (and, indeed, the Acts too) there is abundant evidence of Luke's medical knowledge. Let me give you just one or two illustrations. You remember the incident of Peter's mother-in-law being sick. Luke tells us that she was down with a great fever. Now Mark just says she had a fever. He did not know the difference between one type of fever and another, but this medical man of the day distinguished between a greater or lesser fever. Here is an indication of his knowledge. You remember also the man with leprosy who said to our Lord, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean". Now Luke says that he was a man *full* of leprosy; he was in a very advanced stage, but Matthew and Mark, not being medical men, content themselves with saying he was a leprous man. Then you remember our Lord's parable about it being easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. The word that Luke uses there for "a needle" is "a surgical needle". Interesting, isn't it? All these are marks of Luke's medical knowledge and skill.

Now medicine and surgery, of course, were known before the Christian era, but the sick had never been so systematically cared for as they have since the sojourn of Christ on earth, and someone has said you will not find any ruins of hospitals in Athens or Rome. Such blessings came, as it were, as a sideline to the Gospel. Now here is one of the pioneers of the early Church: Luke, the beloved physician. He was the first medical missionary. Thank God for medical missionaries today who go out to bring relief and healing in the Name of Christ, and use the opportunities of ministry to men's souls at the same time.

Then, Luke is *the first Church historian* and he brought to this task a keen and cultured mind. His is said to be the best Greek in the New Testament. Ernest Renan, the Rationalist, referred to Luke's Gospel as the most literary of all the Gospels and, says this Rationalist (and this is high praise from an unexpected quarter): "Luke's Gospel is the most beautiful book in the world." That is a most remarkable testimony — "the most beautiful book in the world." We would not have expected a man of his thinking to have said anything of the sort. How indebted we are to Luke who, of course, wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. So, when you take up this Gospel and the Acts, you have got two documents that are outstanding for their fulness, their accuracy and their continuity, and they give an abundance of historical references. The first medical missionary and the first Church historian.

The third thing is this, *he was the first hymnologist*. You see we are further in his debt for his introduction of inspired songs into his Gospel. We are indebted to Luke for the Magnificat and the Nunc Dimittis and the Benedictus and the Gloria in Excelsis. Take up his Gospel and you will find at the very beginning he starts with a note of praise, for at the nativity a chorus of angelic song sweeps through the midnight sky, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men", and at the end of the Gospel we read that the disciples returned from the Mount of Ascension to Jerusalem with great joy, being continually in the temple praising God. This note of praise and joy continually surfaces in his writings. How much we are indebted to him for these Gospel canticles!

Let me suggest further regarding Luke that *he was essentially a man of prayer*. There are about fifty references in his Gospel to prayer, and someone has said that, like many another doctor, Luke had a favourite prescription and his prescription was prayer. He prescribed that it should be taken as required, being a certain remedy for all ills. That is a good prescription. He was a man of prayer. You will find that he emphasises our Lord's own prayer life. Our Lord prayed at His baptism, before He chose His Apostles, and at the Transfiguration where, says Luke, "as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered". Luke tells us of our Lord's prayer for Simon Peter: "Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." It is Luke that tells us that Christ cried on the Cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do", and he tells us at the very end that Jesus said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit". Luke alone gives us three great parables on prayer; that of the importunate friend, the persistent widow and the publican and the pharisee — a man of prayer. How we should copy him in this, because this is the remedy for all ills.

Then, notice that Luke was *a man of very wide sympathy*. Luke, more than any of the Gospel writers, gave prominence to the role of women and their plight, but especially of widows in Eastern society. The respect and attention he pays to women stands out against the callousness of the men of his day. Perhaps you know that the Rabbis in Hebrew liturgy used to thank God that they were not born

women. Now the place that Luke accords to women folk in his Gospel shows that, in a very real sense, he was a revolutionary, and shows us that the Gospel had **scally** gripped him; that in Christ there is "neither male nor female: for ye are all **one** in Christ Jesus". Luke is at pains to show that our Lord displayed a totally different attitude to women folk than did his contemporary society. Luke was a man of wide sympathy and he seemed to be very concerned about the socially **under-privileged**. He had a strong sense of social responsibility. So Luke delights to picture our Lord as the Friend of outcasts and sinners. He tells of our Lord's concern for the publican, for the prodigal and for the penitent thief. In the fourth chapter of his Gospel, he quotes those words from Isaiah relating to our Lord: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to **preach** good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are **bound**" (Isaiah 61:1). Luke was a man of wide sympathy. Are our sympathies as **wide**; are we concerned about the unchurched and those that have no interest in the Gospel? Here was a man who was moved to do something about it — a man of wide sympathy.

Also notice, **Luke was a man of insight.** Someone has said that "a minister sees people at their *best*, that a lawyer sees people at their *worst*, but a doctor sees people *as they really are*". If you read the Gospel with that in mind you will see how Luke really sees people as they are, in effect. So he writes two books about people as they are, without it being touched-up in the least bit. He shows us saints like Zacharias and Stephen and Barnabas, and he shows us sinners like Zaccheus, the corrupt civil servant, the dying thief, Saul of Tarsus, and he discloses the weaknesses as well as the virtues of the early believers. Yes, he was a man of insight.

Finally, **he was a man of steadfastness.** He was utterly dependable. When other of Paul's friends were called to other spheres of service Luke remains with the Apostle as the faithful companion, and so Paul has to write on the brink of eternity when he was waiting to face the executioner's block: "Only Luke is with me." "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." (2 Timothy 4:10 and 11). There is Luke with the Apostle right at the end: "Only Luke is with me." What pathetic words they are! But what strength would Luke impart to the Apostle! Indeed, Dean Farrar says that, "Luke's friendship was one of Paul's richest blessings in a sorely troubled life". He remained with Paul through thick and thin, through weal and woe — while others, in the interests of safety, fled, Luke stayed on. He was a singularly gifted and lovable character — a man who was unconsciously great — "Luke, the beloved physician."

Read Luke's Gospel again and thank God that Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, gave to us this priceless document, or documents — the Gospel and the Acts — and let us appreciate the Scriptures even more than we do. Thank God for such men whom He raised up as Luke, the beloved physician — a man of prayer, a man of insight, a man of wide sympathy, a man of steadfastness.

We cannot follow Luke in everything he did but we certainly can be men and women of prayer — men and women of wide sympathy — men and women of insight, and certainly men and women of steadfastness — those who go on to the very end, whoever else may fail and drop out by the wayside.

M.H.

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For Younger Readers

CARINE MACKENZIE

SOWING THE SEEDS

THE OTHER DAY I bought a packet of sunflower seeds. In the one little packet were 75 seeds — the potential for growing 75 big sunflowers. The instructions on the back told us when, where and how to plant them and said that each plant could grow as tall as one and a half to three metres high. The picture on the packet looks most impressive and I am hoping to have some lovely sunflowers in my garden in the summer months.

If I keep the seeds in the packet I will not get any flowers. The seeds have to be planted in the ground. They also need plenty of water and the warmth of the sunshine. Only then will they grow and produce sunflowers. If you drive through France in the summer you may see whole fields of sunflowers. These are grown by the farmer to produce a crop of seeds which will then make sunflower oil. The little seed in the field does not only produce a beautiful flower but a useful crop.

The Word of God is like a little seed. If we keep our Bible, like a closed packet of seeds, in a cupboard or on the shelf, it will not produce any fruit. Merely owning a Bible is not enough. The Word of God has to be planted in our minds and take root in our hearts. The warmth of the Sun of Righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the watering of God the Holy Spirit will cause the seed of the Word to take root in our hearts and to grow good fruit in our lives. The Psalmist wrote: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" in Psalm 119:11. What a difference that would make in our lives if God's Word was influencing us so much that we hated sin and turned from it. It is good for us to try to memorise God's Word and to think about it whenever we can. God the Holy Spirit will bring to our memories the things that we have learned. "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). If the Word of God is not already in our mind it cannot be brought back to our memory.

I do not really expect that all 75 sunflower seeds in my packet will produce a **huge** flower. Jesus tells us in the parable of the sower (Matthew chapter 13) that **not all** the seeds sown produced good fruit. Some seeds fell on the roadside and **the** birds ate them; some landed on stony ground and the heat scorched them; some were choked by thorns and weeds. Not every person who hears the Word of **God** produces spiritual fruit. The growth can be hindered by Satan's work, by **worldliness**, by carelessness. We ought to heed Jesus' warnings, listen to what He **says** and live our life in a way that is pleasing to Him.

PUZZLE

The fruit that God looks for in a godly life is listed in Galatians chapter 5. It is called the fruit of the Spirit. Find the missing words in the following verses and then look up Galatians 5:22-23 to check if all your answers are right.

1. And this is _____, that we walk after his commandments. 2 John 6.
2. These things have I spoken unto you, that my _____ might remain in you and that your _____ might be full. John 15:11.
3. And the _____ of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7.
4. Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all _____ and doctrine. 2 Timothy 4:2.
5. Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up and thy _____ hath made me great. Psalm 18:35.
6. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of _____ filled with all knowledge. . . . Romans 15:14.
7. So then _____ cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17.
8. Put them in mind . . . to be no brawlers but gentle, showing all _____ unto all men. Titus 3:1-2.
9. Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge _____: and to _____ patience. . . . 2 Peter 1:5-6.

Words of Comfort

CHRISTOPHER B. HOLDSWORTH (Dunvegan, Isle of Skye)

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me"
(John 14:1)

THESE ARE PRECIOUS WORDS of comfort from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Cross was imminent, and no doubt a sense of foreboding had dampened the Passover celebrations of the little apostolic band. It would not be long before the discussion at the table would be reduced to a monologue, and having "loved them to the end" (13:1) Jesus felt the need to encourage His disciples at a time when, humanly speaking, perhaps they should have been encouraging Him! It is ever the way in times of distress, that our own sense of grief makes us oblivious to the anguish of others, and we become so wrapped up in our own sense of inadequacy to face an event that we might happily sleep in whilst another's "sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44). How often we must hear that gentle reminder from the lips of the Saviour: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). We must learn to reprove ourselves in the words of the sweet psalmist of Israel: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God" (Psalm 43:5).

In our text, John 14:1, there is a dissuasion to Christians to be overmuch troubled. There is no doubt that it is a temptation to Christians, as to others, to be overburdened with cares. We see it in Rachael's "give me a son or else I die" — dangerous words, which led not only to the birth of two precious sons, but to her death in labour! We see it in David who "remembered God, and was troubled: I complained and my spirit was overwhelmed" (Psalm 77:3). We see it in Hezekiah: "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did moan as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me: (Isaiah 38:14). Surely, too, it was a temptation to Jonah, who "cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me" (Jonah 2:2). Supremely, indeed, one wonders whether Christ Himself might not have had to overcome the temptation to despair: "He was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin."

It is a sin to be so troubled with even legitimate concerns that it robs us of our joy in the Lord. There is nothing, perhaps, so dishonouring to Christ, nor which so mars the Church's witness in the world than the almost proverbial long faces of Christians. It grieves the Holy Spirit, I am sure, and it no doubt betrays our unbelief. What need we to worry, particularly of temporal things, when we have the promise of our Lord, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"? What need we to be

so full of cares, even in eternal things, when we have the "precious promises" of the Gospel?

The resolution of all our cares and concerns is found in our faith: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." Not, indeed, that we trust in our ability to believe, for "faith is the gift of God . . . not of ourselves". Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the object of our faith in all things: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). Faith in Christ brings relief to the troubled soul. It brings comfort, rest and security as we repose in Christ not only at the outset of our Christian pilgrimage, but day by day. As faith carries the soul out of self to God, thus it elevates our thoughts. It sees things in their true perspective: after all, "What is Pharaoh to God?" asks Richard Sibbes.

"Being justified by faith," says Paul, "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). When Jesus our Saviour becomes "our peace" (Ephesians 2:14), then we are enabled to lay hold upon the promises, such as those in John's Gospel chapter 14: "I go to prepare a place for you: (verse 2); "I will come again, and receive you unto myself" (verse 3); "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do" (verse 12); "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do . . . If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (verses 13 and 14). There is the promise of the help of the Holy Spirit and, implicitly, of the Lord's second coming; and finally, explicitly, of "the peace of God which passeth all understanding"; "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (verse 27).

With that superlative peace, and such like promises, why should our hearts be troubled?

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Directions for Discipline (2)

STAN EVERS (Potton, Beds)

DISCIPLINE IS OUT OF FASHION in today's society. It is unpopular in the Church as well. But as Christians we believe the Bible is God's Word and therefore we ought to take this neglected subject seriously. We are looking at three questions: Why practice discipline? How do we discipline? and Who do we discipline? In a previous article we saw three reasons for the discipline of backsliding Christians: To obey God, To reclaim offenders and To keep the Church pure. Now let us consider —

QUESTION 2: HOW DO WE DISCIPLINE?

There are three facets to biblical discipline. The first is:

1. Admonition

This word occurs twice in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14 (I suggest you open your Bible at the passage). The Apostle Paul writes about the responsibilities of the elders ("Brethren . . . over you in the Lord") and Church members ("we exhort you, brethren"). The elders are to "admonish" the Church (verse 12) and the brethren are to "warn" one another (verse 14). "Admonish" and "warn" are from the same Greek root; both are aspects of "admonishing". No English word conveys the richness of the original Greek which also includes encouragement and exhortation. Closely aligned to this dual ministry of admonishing and warning are the "comfort" (to come alongside) and "edify" (to build up) ministries of verse 11. Are we pulling believers down by carping criticism or building them up by warm encouragement?

As we think about admonition it becomes clear that discipline is more than removing erring members from membership; it is a constant concern for the spiritual health of God's people. To admonish and warn is demanding because it involves strenuous hard work (the elders "labour among you"), firm leadership ("over you in the Lord"), courage ("warn" means plain speaking) and wisdom to deal helpfully with the diverse groups mentioned in verse 14. Sometimes admonition and warning meet resistance which is the reason Paul tells the Thessalonians to esteem and live at peace with their spiritual leaders (verses 12-13). Both elders and members are to admonish . . .

The unruly (verse 14) — The "unruly" have an unhappy knack of falling out with fellow Christians. We urge them to live in harmony with other believers and to submit to their leaders who derive their authority from God's Word. We remind the "unruly" of Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

The feebleminded (verse 14) — These dear folk, though genuine believers, often lack assurance and grapple with doubts and fears because of a tender conscience. We encourage these believers by reminding them of the Shepherd's unchanging love even for the weakest of His sheep. Each one of His sheep has eternal life; not one of them will perish (John 10:28).

The weak (verse 14) — These Christians struggle with difficulties, perhaps at home, at work, at school, at college or university. We support these believers as we pray for and with them and as we direct them to the precious promises of God's Word, such as: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalm 55:22).

Patience is an essential quality for the ministry of admonition, therefore Paul writes, "be patient toward all men" (verse 14). The unruly, feebleminded and the

weak are often slow to respond to loving discipline and therefore may need many hours of patient care and counselling.

Another aspect of biblical discipline is:

2. Reproof (sometimes translated as rebuke, convince or convict)

An example of reproof comes in the story of David after his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). Twelve months later the Lord sends Nathan to tell David a parable of a rich man who stole his poor neighbour's little lamb. "Punish the thief," orders David. "You are the man," says Nathan as he points his finger at the king (2 Samuel; 12:7). Nathan's reproof led to David's repentance expressed in Psalm 51.

In the New Testament Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit's work of reproving sinners: "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). The Holy Spirit convicts of sin to bring us to conversion. Once converted He reproves us when we stray from the path of obedience. This reproof may come through a troubled conscience as we read God's Word and hear it preached. It may also come through a Christian parent, minister or friend; the voice of a "Nathan" calling us to repentance.

When admonition and reproof fail to bring an erring Christian to repentance then we use the third kind of discipline:

3. Excommunication

While we admonish and reprove we treat the offender as a brother in-line with Paul's teaching in 2 Thessalonians 3:15: "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." However, once removed from membership the obdurate brother is treated as "an heathen man" (Matthew 18:17). We treat him in the way he has behaved; as an unbeliever. Nevertheless, we still pray for his return to the Saviour whom he now rejects. Hymenaeus and Alexander, and the depraved member at Corinth, had reached this stage when Paul "delivered" them "unto Satan" (1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5).

Before we come to the third question we ought to stress that the only basis for admonition, reproof and excommunication is God's Word. We don't discipline someone because he disagrees with our opinions but because he has disobeyed the clear commands of God in His inerrant Word.

QUESTION 3: WHO SHOULD WE DISCIPLINE?

1. The stubborn

Matthew 18 pictures a self-willed believer: "He will *not* hear" (verse 16) when visited initially by one believer and then later when two or more call on him, "he shall neglect to hear them" (verse 17). Discipline by the whole Church becomes unavoidable; beginning, perhaps, with a ban from the Lord's Supper, leading to excommunication, if there is no contrition.

2. The divisive

In the last article we saw how Hymenaeus and Alexander were ringleaders of a group causing divisions in the Ephesian Church. Their futile debates about “fables” and “genealogies” caused disputes within the Church (1 Timothy 1:3-7). Most splits in Churches centre on secondary issues raised by disagreeable people who pick arguments and who dogmatically air their opinions regardless of the divisions caused or people offended. Divisions distract from fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) and therefore the culprits ought to receive discipline.

3. The scandalous

The sinful Church member mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5 entered into an illicit affair with his stepmother (assuming this is the meaning of “his father’s wife”); a scandalous offence even among the unbelievers of Corinth, well-known for their immorality. “Deliver such an one unto Satan” commands the Apostle Paul. Public sin disgraces the Church and dishonours the Name of Christ.

Turning again to 1 Timothy we read in 5:19-20 that even spiritual leaders may fall into heinous sin and are therefore not exempt from discipline. “Two or three witnesses” are necessary to support a charge against an elder to prove guilt beyond any doubt before discipline. The elder faces public rebuke as a warning to others: “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (verse 20).

It is painful dealing with scandalous sinners, but if we are to preserve the purity of the Church and the credibility of its leaders, such sinners, whatever their position or gifts, must be disciplined.

4. The heretical

Paul “delivered” Hymenaeus “unto Satan” (1 Timothy 1:20) because he declared that “the resurrection [of believers] is past already” (2 Timothy 2:18). It is true Paul compares conversion to rising from the dead (Ephesians 2:1, 5); nevertheless he also taught a physical resurrection from the dead (1 Corinthians 15). Hymenaeus emphatically denied this future resurrection of Christians from the dead at Christ’s return. Does it matter what people believe? Yes! Heresy is like “a canker” (2 Timothy 2:17) or cancer which spreads through the body and leads to death. How urgent then to cut out the cancer by removing false teachers from the Church! Of course, we make a distinction between those who deliberately teach false doctrine to undermine the ministry of God’s Word, and believers who are ill taught in biblical doctrines.

How to avoid discipline

To avoid the Lord’s discipline, and the discipline of the Church in His Name, we discipline ourselves: “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be

condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:31-32). If we put our sins to death (Romans 8:13) then the Church will not have cause to "deliver" us "unto Satan" (1 Corinthians 5:5). If we are busy serving the Lord we don't have time to serve the devil. The best antidote to backsliding is to "consider the Apostle and High Priest . . . Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1). Love Him and you won't love the world!

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Reflections on a Thunderstorm

AUGUSTUS M. TOPLADY (1740-1778)

One-time Editor of the Gospel Magazine

WHEN THE LIGHTING FLASHES, and when the thunder rolls, do we as it were hear the Almighty speak in the one and see a glimpse of His glory in the other? If when the clouds pour out water, when the air thunders and the arrows of His lightning are sent abroad, it is natural for the guilty to tremble, for the just to pray, and for all to look up to Him whose voice is thus mighty in operation; where will the ungodly, where will the unbeliever, where will the habitual sinner appear, when the Lord Himself descends from heaven with a shout, a shout that shall unbar the gates of death, recall the scattered dust of all mankind, and wake that dust to life?

May we ever listen to the Almighty when He speaks in thunder, or looks in lightning, and call to mind that awful period when the final trump shall summon us to the bar. May every such season be improved to this beneficial purpose! And though thunder and other effects are under God, owing to natural causes and may be accounted for on natural principles; yet let us remember that natural causes are caused by the God of nature, and that the effects which they produce are in truth the effects of His all-active, all-governing providence. And this is the glorious God that maketh the thunder. Such a view of things will render the most obvious events lessons of the highest instruction, and means of spiritual improvement. Thus considered thunder teaches, and lightning holds the lamp to knowledge; nature becomes subservient to grace, and the laws of the material system direct to heaven.

Should we not aspire to the friendship of that Being whose voice shakes the earth, and whose eyes are as a flame of fire? Should we not approach His footstool, humbled in the dust of repentance and trusting in the propitiation of Him who hushed the infinitely more dreadful thunder of divine resentment, and in His own blood quenched the lightning of vindictive wrath? Possessed of interest in His availing merit, and conformed, as far as human infirmity will permit, to His blessed example, we need fear nothing. Though the earth was

removed and the hills carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof should rage and swell, and the mountains shake at the tempest of the same; yet safely anchored on the rock of redeeming merit and lodging in the arms of God's everlasting love, we should be equally free from both danger and from dread.

Let the inferior thunders grate upon the ear, let the sublunary lightnings flash terror on the eye, so we are enabled to take shelter beneath the hiding place of a Redeemer's righteousness, and His Spirit, in gentlest accents, whispers comfort to the heart. Happy they who thus dwell beneath the defence of the Almighty and to whom His faithfulness and truth are a shield and buckler!



A Safe Stronghold

DAVID N. SAMUEL (Devizes, Wilts)

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10)

TOWERS ARE A COMMON SIGHT; most parish churches have a tower, many of them are very ancient. They were built in times of unrest and were intended to be places of safety and security. Normally they have walls of great thickness and strength, made to withstand attack and siege. They were often built on high ground which made it difficult for the enemy to attack them, and easy for those within to defend them. When the enemy came in sight the people retreated to these places for refuge and defence. This was the purpose for which many of the church towers were originally built. They were a place to resort to in time of trouble.

Now our text says that the name of the Lord is a strong tower. The name of the Lord is a place of refuge and security for the righteous, the believing, God-fearing man. There he will find safety and protection from the enemy in all times of trouble.

First, we have to recognise that this world and our life in it are subject to troubles of one kind and another

The poet reminds us that "troubles come not singly, but in troops", like bands or waves of the invading enemy, sweeping over the land.

There are the troubles of the world that we read of or hear of in the news. Wars and rumours of wars, diseases, famine, strife. There is no cessation of these troubles, they come and overspread the face of the earth, and quarter themselves upon mankind like a conquering army. And sometimes we do not merely hear of them, but they touch and impinge upon our lives either directly or indirectly.

Then there are troubles that touch us more nearly, conflicts and sufferings of **one** kind or another that affect our family or friends or come to us personally. None is free from these things. There are the troubles that arise from the mere contingency and uncertainty of life, for we cannot tell what a day will bring forth. It may begin without a cloud in the sky, but soon all has become overcast.

Whatever our condition or status in life, there is no protection from these things that accompany human existence. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." David was a king and lived in a palace, in great splendour, and with a personal bodyguard. But he suffered many things, so that he cried out, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me". His child died, Absalom his favourite son rose against him in rebellion, and he was persecuted and betrayed.

Then again, there are the troubles that arise within the soul, the assaults and temptations of Satan. Evil thoughts arise in our hearts and trouble us, tempting and goading us into sin, so that we might begin to doubt whether we are really Christians.

I have described these different troops of the enemy, that come in waves upon us, invading, marauding and laying waste, as did the enemies of old. We are all familiar with them. What respite, what deliverance can there be from them? Where can we go for refuge? When we are so pressed and troubled we need to remember the words of our text: "The name of the Lord is a strong tower."

Secondly, let us consider the refuge which God has so graciously provided for His people in all their affliction and troubles: It is His name

His name is meant to be to them as the ancient towers with their thick impregnable walls were to the people who fled to them for refuge from their enemies. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." The name of the Lord is our castle and high tower, to which we should resort at all times.

Now by the name of the Lord we are meant to understand His nature and character towards His believing people. That is what He is to them in Jesus Christ and through the covenant of grace. A name is associated with the character of a person. We speak of someone's "good name", by which we mean his character. God's nature and character are revealed to us in His acts and in His Word. There we see displayed His attributes of love, power, wisdom, mercy, and so forth. When Moses met with the Lord in the wilderness at the burning bush, he asked by what name He would be known to the children of Israel, and God said to Moses: "I am that I am." In revealing His name God revealed something of His character as the eternal God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

But the nature and character of God are specially shown to us in His Son, Jesus Christ, in His covenant and promises to us in Him. When Philip said to Jesus, "Show us the Father", Jesus answered him by saying, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father", because the Lord Jesus Christ is the "brightness of his glory and

the express image of his person". In Christ we see God — Jehovah visible. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

1. *He is revealed as the God of love.* "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. . . ." "God is love," says John, and again he declares: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). But this is not just love in a general way, but love which He bears towards His people, whom He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. He has loved them with an everlasting love and will therefore never let them go. He is their God for ever and ever. "Nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."

To be loved by a creature, to know that a human being loves you and values you is a very elevating thought. It enriches and enhances life to be so loved. But to know that God loves you, that the Creator of all things, the Father of heaven, loves you — that is quite amazing! Is it not a great, high tower of defence? Is it not a sure refuge?

2. *God is revealed as faithful and true.* He will never forsake those whom He loves. His Word and promises to them are sure. His covenant with them cannot fail. "He hath made with me," says David, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire" (2 Samuel 23:5). He will not recall or alter His Word. His promises and covenant are certain and unchangeable. It is ordered in all things and sure. This was the ground of David's confidence, not anything in himself. Everything was not well with David and he knew that. "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant. . . ." That is, David is saying, although God knows that neither I nor my children have lived and ruled as we should have done; notwithstanding all our transgressions, yet God has made with me an everlasting covenant. This steadfast mercy and faithfulness of God was David's high tower, as it must be of every believer.

When the Protector, Oliver Cromwell, was dying, he made much of the covenant, because he said: "God is bound in faithfulness to Christ, and in Him to us." "Faith in the covenant is my only support. And if I believe not — He abides faithful!"

3. *He is the God of mercy.* "He keepeth not his anger forever." "He is slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." These are the assurances we find in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we are freely bidden to come to Him. He has made open the way. He has provided a sacrifice and an atonement for sin. There is mercy, pardon and redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1-2). Is not this a high tower of defence against the enemy? When the accuser comes, when he would bid us despair of forgiveness, may we not hide here? His name reveals

Himself to us as Saviour. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

4. *He is the God of truth.* What He has revealed in His Word is truth. "Thy word is truth" — the only truth there is without any qualification. The knowledge and opinions of men will change, they are relative. That applies to the whole body of human knowledge. It is subject to change. It has changed and it will change again, which leads the cynic, like Pilate, to say: "What is truth?" But God's revealed Word is the only enduring truth. It is "a lamp to our feet and a light to our path". It is truth unchanged and unchanging. Is not that a great and high tower, impenetrable and impregnable, for all God's people? A place of refuge and complete safety.

"Saviour, if of Zion's city,
I through grace a member am,
Let the world deride or pity,
I shall glory in thy name."

The Psalmist rejoices in the strength of Zion. He says: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks" (Psalm 48:12-13). See how strong she is; she is a sure place of refuge.

Thirdly, notice who are those who seek for refuge

Our text tells us they are "the righteous". That may seem to exclude us. For it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). But by the righteous, it means here, those who fear God, who trust in Him and seek to live according to His will. It is intended to exclude those who think that they may live as they please in neglect and contempt of God, and yet will be saved. And are there not many who think like that, that however they live they will go to heaven when they die? That somehow, in the end, it will be alright. So, by the righteous, we are meant to understand here, those who fear or reverence God. Those who put their trust in God now, who seek to order their lives according to His Word. These hide themselves in the refuge of God's name. They take cover within the walls of salvation, they fly to the refuge set before them. The troubled, the afflicted, the tempted, the tried, they run to the place of safety. The door is open to them.

Now the means by which they run to the place of safety is *faith*. In their troubles they look to Christ, they turn their eyes upon Him, and so take refuge in Him. Luther used to say: "When you get up in the morning, say the creed, I believe in God, the Father Almighty . . . and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord," and so on. Remind yourself and affirm again that He came into the world to save you, that He died for your sins and rose again for your justification. He is now seated in glory, and because I am in Him by faith I am also seated together with Christ in the heavenly places; He is mine and I am His. That is what it means to run by faith to the place of refuge and safety.

The righteous also run to this tower of God's name by *devotion and prayer*. Their footsteps take them quickly to the place, they do not hesitate. They resort to the name of God, their high tower. Men may try to help and comfort them. But God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.

Finally, having so run into the tower of God's name they are safe, or literally, "lifted up", "set aloft"

That is, they are set above their enemies, out of their reach, and look down upon them from this place. They look down upon their troubles and fears and anxieties from this eyrie. They go out of themselves, retire from the world, as it were, and live above; they dwell in God. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3).

The old monks retired from the world to find peace, as they thought, behind the walls of their monasteries; but they could not in fact leave the world behind, for they carried it with them in their hearts. Luther relates, how in a thunderstorm he was terrified of death, and cried out, "St. Anne, save me!". He fled to a monastery, but he did not find the safety and security he sought, not until he came to faith in God. Then he found the name of God was a strong tower and sang, "A safe stronghold our God is still". The only answer is the life of faith, by which we live in this world, yet above it. We live in God, by faith, day by day. Our conversation or citizenship is in heaven, although we live yet in the world. That is a very wonderful thing. It is what is intended by the words of our text, when it says that by seeking refuge in the name of God we are safe or lifted above.

Our life in this world, as we have been reminded, is subject to many trials, but we have a strong tower where we may find refuge. It is the name of the Lord, which is revealed to us in His Word, but specially in the living Word of God, His Son Jesus Christ. If we resort there by faith we shall find safety.

THE GREAT PILOT OF THE TEMPEST-TOSSED CHURCH

Dr. John Owen, for five years vice-chancellor of Oxford University, ended his days at Ealing: it was in this period he wrote his *Meditation on the Glory of Christ*. In his last days in 1683, when God's people were being bitterly persecuted, he said: "I am leaving the ship of the Church in a storm; but whilst the great Pilot is in it, the loss of a poor under-rower will be inconsiderable. Live, and pray, and hope, and wait patiently, and do not despond: the promise stands invincible, that He will never leave us nor forsake us, so that we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me'" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

The Mercy Seat

"From every stormy wind that blows . . . "

THESE VERSES, which appear on the inside cover, were written by Hugh Stowell, one of the leading evangelical ministers in the Church of England of his time.

He was born in 1799 in the Isle of Man, the son of a clergyman whose family were noted for their love of Scripture and Reformation truth. Hugh Stowell graduated at Oxford in 1822. At the university he was renowned for his poetical gifts as a public speaker and debater, being an orator of the first order.

Having completed his studies he was nominated for the curacy of St. Stephen's, Salford, Lancashire. It was only with great hesitation that Bishop C. J. Blomfield licensed this young man who was reputed to be "an extemporaneous firebrand". He had an immediate impact upon the parish and soon the church was thronged with not even standing room for those who failed to come early.

In 1831 he became rector of Christ Church, Salford, remaining there until his death in 1865. Here he exercised a faithful ministry, under which many were brought to saving faith in Christ. Stowell had a great love for children and his very large Sunday Schools were very much part of his ministry. He wrote "Jesus is our Shepherd, wiping every tear" for the young of his flock. He understood the secret of being simple although definite.

The business of his life was to promote the glory of God in the salvation of souls. He was a man of unwearied activity, never sparing himself, "instant in season and out of season". He sought to apply his preaching to those who sat under his ministry. In the preface to his sermons on Nehemiah he says: "I have striven to weave the golden thread of evangelical doctrine into the texture of everyday duty and character."

Canon Stowell constantly exposed the Romeward movement in the Church of England which was led by Newman, Pusey and Faber. He frequently spoke at public meetings in support of Reformation principles, earnestly contending for the faith. Many facing death have found comfort in his lines:

"Jesus is our Shepherd;
Guarded by His arm,
Though the wolves may raven,
None can do us harm;
When we tread death's valley,
Dark with fearful gloom,
We will fear no evil,
Victors o'er the tomb."

Exhortation to Watchfulness

Notes of a Sermon by the REV. WILLIAM PARKS (1809-1867)

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Peter 5:8-9)

MANY PEOPLE fancy that, when we are justified by faith and have peace with God, when we have been the subjects of the great change, when we are "new creatures", we are never after liable to the assaults of Satan, or, at all events, we are beyond the possibility of being overcome by him. But this is a delusion, and one which he himself labours hard to propagate; for by it he throws young believers off their guard, who thus become a more easy prey to him.

The fact is the other way about. I cannot just now call to mind Mr. Hart's lines upon this subject, but they are to this effect, viz., when the sweet privilege of pardon is sealed home upon the conscience, then, from that moment, the conflict begins. Yes, this is the fact; and you who know it not will have to learn it in the school of experience. Before this, we have no conflict with Satan; all is smooth and easy; we quietly run in the groove he has fixed for us; the goods of the palace are in peace, but when once the Lord lays His hand upon us, and takes us out of Satan's bondage, then begins the conflict, the assault and battery.

Both Scripture and experience prove this. Just look into two or three passages in this epistle for confirmation of this. Look at 1 Peter 2:11. This is addressed to the elect of God, to the beloved who are sanctified of the Spirit, to those who have been called out of darkness into marvellous light; and would it have been addressed to them on the supposition that temptation by Satan were an impossibility, or that success were out of the question? Surely not.

Look again into 1 Peter 4:12. Here is another aspect of Satan's assaults. Whatever the "fiery trial" is to which the apostle refers, it is clear that it was to be endured by the saints of God; and wherever there is such a trial, victory on the part of the saints is not invariable, unless we suppose them to be invincible or sinless.

Look again into the text (1 Peter 5:8 and 10). Does not this clearly indicate the fiercest assaults on the part of Satan, and much suffering on the part of the saints? And I would remind you that we do not suffer much when we are not wounded or worsted. If, for instance, I have a cruel antagonist whom I am always able to thrash, I cannot be said to suffer; but, if he sometimes thrashes me, and wounds me, I suffer considerably. Now, it is so with Satan and the saints. They are at perpetual war. Sometimes the one and sometimes the other gets the best of it. But freedom from sin is the lot of no man whilst in the flesh.

I will now remind you of some of Satan's temptations, then instruct you what to do under the circumstances.

1. SOME OF SATAN'S TEMPTATIONS

As I often remind you, Satan is wiser and stronger than all men put together. He is called the Old Serpent on account of his subtilty, and he is likened to a lion on account of his strength. His wisdom is so great that he knows to a nicety the peculiar weakness of each saint, and assails him at that point. He would no more think of plying a cold phlegmatic saint with fleshly lust, than he would think of tempting a highly honest saint with felony. No, such would be but labour lost, and he knows better than that. But he knows the peculiar disposition of each of us, and tempts us accordingly. As it has been well said: "He tempts the ambitious man with a crown, and the sanguine man with beauty."

Now, this fact alone ought to keep the saints from boasting over one another. How often, alas! do we find one comparing himself with a poor brother who has been overcome by a temptation that would have no power over himself, and saying, "What a shameful thing it is, that So-and-so should be in debt. What a disgraceful thing it is, that So-and-so should be hunting after applause." Whereas, the fault-finder, having plenty of money and no ambition, is not thus tempted, yet may all the while be overcome by a temptation that those others are proof against. I can tell all the saints that they have nothing to boast about, and that there is not one of them but whom Satan may successfully tempt through their own peculiar disposition.

But to come to the point and particularise some of Satan's temptations:

First, *one is to drive us to despair*. When God awakens a sinner, Satan is sure to be on the alert. You know a poor sinner when he is quickened is in an awful state, for he sees himself as he really is, a mass of corruption. Satan then comes and suggests: "There can be no hope for you. God wants holy people, good people, pure people, but not such as you." And thus is the poor quickened one in great terror. However, God comes to the rescue, and points to Christ, whose blood can cleanse from all sin, and then the poor sinner has peace.

Secondly, another temptation of Satan's is *to make the young convert presume*. Satan injects pride into the hearts of young saints. They begin to think they are something more than common, and to treat their less-favoured fellow-sinners with contempt. This has been a very successful trap of Satan's. But God has to come and break it. And the way He does it brings great pain to the young saint. He is suffered to fall into some grievous sin, that he may have his mouth shut for ever from all boasting. Poor Peter is a melancholy illustration of this. He presumed terribly, but after his fall he ever spoke of being kept by the power of God.

Thirdly, another temptation of Satan's is *unbelieving thoughts of God and the Gospel*. Sometimes the saints are so harassed with these that they can see no difference between themselves and open unbelievers. Here again Satan watches

his opportunity. Some saints are given to reflection and to reason more than others. They desire to make all Scripture consistent with themselves. They think of the many great and gifted men of this world who ridicule the Gospel of the grace of God. They think of the many wretches who disgrace that Gospel by glaring wickedness, and make a cloak of it to cover their sin; and these things bring in a flood of unbelief. They are for throwing the Gospel over altogether, and taking up with the law or with natural religion. They are for becoming unbelievers *in toto*. It is Satan who is at the bottom of all this.

But God comes to the rescue, by giving the tempted ones such a sight and sense of sin, and of their lost estate by nature, as to constrain them to confess Christ and free grace as their only refuge. Aye, the very temptation that was meant for our destruction by Satan is overruled for our good, and, like the storm in the fable that was meant to blow off the traveller's cloak, makes him hug it more closely to him.

Fourthly, another temptation of Satan's is *the world and its attractions*; not the openly profane and overtly wicked world, this would be a pointless weapon for the saints; but the genteel, the respectable, the kind, and intellectual world. This is one of the most subtle devices or temptations of Satan. "There can be no harm," says Satan, "in accepting such or such an invitation; the parties are so agreeable, and so good-natured; they are no bigots; they will never bother you with their thoughts of religion; and you may be instrumental in doing them a deal of good; mix with them and see what will come of it." This has often succeeded; but oh, the leanness of soul and the misery that have followed!

I have felt the consequences many a time, especially through mixing with unbelieving ministers. These are most terrible snares to God's poor people. Generally well-educated, moral, amiable, good-natured, and entertaining, they are the ready instruments of the evil one, for the sapping and undermining of the Gospel of the grace of God. An unbelieving clergyman or minister is a more fearful companion or associate than an open blasphemer.

Fifthly, another temptation of Satan's is *making little use of the means of grace*; many a time he persuades God's people that they will do at home just as well as in the sanctuary. "Cease ye from man," says Satan, quoting, but, as usual, misapplying, the Scriptures. "Cease ye from man. What's the use in your going to church this morning or this afternoon whilst you have the Bible at your elbow? Read that, and you will get more good than if you were to hear half-a-dozen sermons." And so the poor lazy or fastidious saint is caught in the snare. How often have I known this to take effect, to the injury of many souls in this congregation! Sermons that have been remarkably blessed to many souls have never been heard by certain parties who have been for the time in Satan's snare.

2. WHAT TO DO UNDER TEMPTATION

Now, I would attempt to instruct you under the circumstances. Let us first look into the text: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring

lion. walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world," i.e., Be circumspect, be prudent, be watchful, etc.; whom resist stedfast in the faith, etc.

I dare say many of you have oftentimes resisted the devil, and found your resistance was like tow before the fire, or like the green withes in the hands of Samson. What was the reason? You did not follow the instructions of the text, you omitted "*in the faith*", and what is that? Why, the great truths of the Gospel, e.g., "Kept by the power of God"; "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you"; "In God is our strength"; "Christ Jesus, who is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption"; "I am thy shield"; "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver"; "The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin"; "If any man sin, we have an Advocate, even Jesus Christ the righteous". This is the faith, and, instead of resisting Satan in this faith, we have for the time forgotten or neglected the faith, and gone forth to meet Goliath in Saul's armour. This must account for our frequent defeats and failures. So listen:

First, when you are tempted to despair on account of the greatness and number of your sins, ply Satan with "the blood of Jesus", etc. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate," etc.

Secondly, when you are tempted to presume, ply Satan with, "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God", and remember there is no strength but in God, and "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble".

Thirdly, when you are tempted to unbelief, ply Satan with, "He that believeth not shall be damned", and "Not many wise, nor many mighty", etc., "are called", etc.

Fourthly, when you are tempted by the world and its attractions, ply Satan with, "The friendship of this world is enmity with God"; "Whoso loveth the world is the enemy of God"; and, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?".

Fifthly, when you are tempted to neglect the means of grace, ply Satan with, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is"; and "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst".

In short, resisting the devil in the faith is but another phrase for taking the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith, and looking unto Jesus, who is pledged to make you more than conquerors.

[Sermon 44, in *Notes of Sermons*, 1868]

Editor's Note: William Parks was born in Dublin and graduated at Trinity College. He was curate in charge of Rainow near Macclesfield and then rector of Openshaw, Manchester, 1843-1867. Mr. Parks was one of the clearest and most powerful preachers of his time, fearlessly proclaiming the whole counsel of God. His written works include: *The Five Points*; *Notes of Sermons* and *No Uncertain Sound*.

The Gentleness of God

DUDLEY BRADSHAW (Brooke, Norwich)

"Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great" (Psalm 18:35)

"**THY GENTLENESS** hath made me great." What a beautiful thought this is! How One who is so utterly almighty and whose power and glory are shown so throughout the whole of the Scriptures and whose mighty works fill us with awe and reverence and even dread, how *He* can be described as "gentle"! What does it mean? When we see, for instance, in ordinary terms, a very, very strong man who is gentle, it means surely that he does not use all his strength. He restricts it, he holds it in check. It is there — and we know it is there — but, instead of always using it or even using part of it, he holds it back in reserve and only uses a tiny part of it. This is the important thing, he suits his touch to whatever he is doing. That, really, is the epitome of gentleness, where there is strength which is *not* all used but held back in control and suited to whatever the strong person is doing.

When we transfer an illustration like that to the almighty Lord of heaven and earth it fits in perfectly with the word which is used here in this Psalm by David. The same word is used in 2 Samuel 22:36, where we have a virtual repeat of this Psalm, and the word comes from a Hebrew root which effectively means "humility" or "condescension", "self-lowering". In His dealings with His people, God does this. He lowers Himself; he comes down to their level. He deals with them, suiting His touch upon them to what they are. He is gentle. The Lord does not handle His people roughly. There is a gentleness in God which the Psalmist recognises here and has summed up for us.

I wonder, is this an aspect of the character of God which perhaps we have not thought about sufficiently? It seems to me we rightly speak (and we shall continue to do so) of His power, grace, mercy, love, holiness, justice and His awesome greatness and His mighty acts, but I believe there is something here that we may have in measure overlooked. It is a beautiful subject for meditation — the gentleness of God.

One of the loveliest ways to look at it, for instance, is to take that verse we find in Isaiah 66:13, where the Lord says: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Now, if you hold in your mind that picture of a little child in its mother's arms — the mother is strong — the strength of a mother can sometimes be what we would call almost supernatural if she is called upon to defend her child. But in a mother's handling and dealing with her child, she does not bring all that strength into play — she withholds the use of her strength and adapts her touch to the little one's comfort and security. And her whole manner and bearing is adapted to the little one's need and state. A child in its mother's

arms feels a sense of total security because of the mother's gentleness. It feels instinctively secure because it feels and knows that the mother cannot harm it; **although** it couldn't put it into words, it feels and knows the mother's gentleness. **Now, God** is like that.

There is a beautiful passage in Psalm 78:38-39: "But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For *he remembered that they were but flesh*; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again." Here it is, "*many a time*" — isn't that beautiful? The *gentleness* of God even in the deserved chastisement of His people. He could in wrath righteously have slaughtered Israel **and** come down on them like a bomb — they deserved it. But, *no*, He remembered their pathetic weakness and, even though He had to chastise them, He dealt gently with them. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:10-12). This makes the Almighty Himself so wonderfully approachable, even by the chief of sinners, or by a little child. The hymn that is sometimes mocked at in these days contains a beautiful truth:

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child."

Let us take three simple illustrations from the Scripture to illustrate aspects of the *gentleness* of God.

First, go back to the Garden of Eden when our first parents sinned, and see the gentleness of God in His dealings with them. This first sin was particularly vile because Adam and Eve had no predisposition to sin as we have. They were not born in sin, they were righteous and holy and in living, loving, daily communion with their Maker. It is unimaginable to us because we have been born in sin. They had all their heart could wish and they were unstained and unspotted and absolutely unspoiled by sin, and yet, even under those circumstances, they were guilty of lust and of greed which came in in flagrant disobedience against the kindness and goodness of the living God.

But, see the reaction of God. He could justly and righteously have come down *there* in the Garden of Eden and removed them off the face of the earth, and He would not have done wrong. They had deliberately, flagrantly, disobeyed His Word, lured into it by the serpent. But Adam was not lured into it by the serpent — he went deliberately because he wanted to stand by his wife. But even in His dealings with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eve, it seems to *me* that there is wonderful tenderness and gentleness.

It appears in the very words of the Lord when He came down into the Garden and said: "Adam, where art thou?" That was a gentle and yet terrible question. Do you not think there was pain in the voice of God when He asked that? "Oh!

Adam, what is it you have done?" Adam did not know that he had brought into this beautiful world that God had created all the suffering and the misery that has ever existed — it all came in by that sin.

I do believe there was grief in the heart of God when He asked that question — not because God was hurt, but because He *felt* for the man and woman He had created. He *knew* what they were plunging themselves into, and the heart of God was pained as He foresaw and knew the suffering and the misery they had brought upon themselves. "For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men" (Lamentations 3:33). He takes no *pleasure* in it and, although in His sovereign and eternal decree, He permitted the fall for His own wise and gracious ends, He took no pleasure in it. It gave Him no joy to punish the sin of our first parents or to *see* their misery, and so, in His approach to them, there is this gentleness, "Oh! Adam, where art thou?"

See here, too, the way He gave them every opportunity to speak for themselves. He did not just come down and stun them into silence. "What is it you have done?" And Adam sought to lay the blame on Eve, so God gave Eve the opportunity to speak. He did not turn them out of the Garden of Eden without any self-defence, or anything of that nature. He was gentle even in leading up to what was the inevitable punishment, and, if we follow the story, *He must punish them*: "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). This is His own Word and He cannot go back on it. The ground would be cursed and conception would be in sorrow and childbirth would be in pain, and death would ensue with all its pains and attendant evils. I believe we cannot grasp the magnitude of the divine chastisement that, from Paradise without trace of sin, all these things came in. No longer Eden, but thorns and thistles, and sweat, pain, sorrow and death.

But you see gentleness even in that chastisement. God did three wonderful things. Even there He promised the coming Saviour who would put things right and, though in sorrow the woman would bring forth children, yet *He was to be the seed of the woman* — not the seed of the man. Eve had been so lured into transgression, we could say if we used human reasoning, that she was the cause of the trouble. Satan got at her and it was *she* who fell. But *here* is the promise of the coming Saviour. *Not* the seed of the man, *but the seed of the woman* should bruise the serpent's head.

See the gentleness and the love. Out of that very punishment, out of the sorrow of conception and the pain of childbirth will come the salvation of multitudes because, from that very seed of the woman, shall the Deliverer come forth. The coming Saviour was born of a woman — He never was born of a man — and the woman's name was Mary. "And thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Never did God leave them without light, the light of the Gospel there in Eden. And the *gentleness* of God was in that.

Second, see too the gentleness of God in this wonderful making of the coats of skin. There had been no blood shed on the earth before God shed the first blood. I find that a very remarkable and a wonderful act of gentleness. The Lord made

coats to cover the nakedness of the sinful pair and in it He pictured and shadowed forth the blood-shedding of our Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice for sinners. Though He was slain by human hands, there is a wonderful and sublime and profound sense in which He was slain by God as Judge. He spared not His own Son, He delivered Him up. He gave Him up for us all to provide a covering for the sins of all who should subsequently believe on Him. I see the gentleness of God there in the Garden of Eden; even in the midst of this chastisement it was not all loss. The love and the gentleness of God came to them there.

There is also something else which on first sight seems hard but which, in fact, is not, because in the Garden was the Tree of Life. "Now," says God, "lest the man eat of that Tree of Life and live for ever, I will turn him out of the Garden of Eden so that he cannot eat of that Tree." I see *mercy* here and I see *gentleness* because, if sinful Adam had eaten of that Tree of Life, he would have perpetuated his own sinful life, he would have lived for ever in a state of sin and its misery. God did not want him to do that. Adam must die. Now that *was* part of the punishment, but I believe *that* was part of the gentleness. In the gentleness of God it was a mercy; death would release him from his sinful body that through death it might be raised again immortal and incorruptible through the Lord Jesus, through that Seed of the woman that was to come.

Now there must be a change to our mortal, sinful bodies and, though at the return of our blessed Lord there will be still those of His people who are alive and remain, their bodies will have to be changed, without seeing death. But, for most of God's people, death must come. But do you see death as a mercy? *It is* for the people of God! It is the putting off of the mortal body, with all its frailty and all its sin, so that it may be raised again a glorious body like unto *His* body, freed from sin and all its accompaniments. John Bunyan puts it very beautifully in speaking in his *Pilgrim's Progress* of those pilgrims who crossed the river of death when he says: "They left behind their graveclothes in the river." There is something passing wonderful about that. *In the mercy of God* death has become, not only a chastisement, but death is the *gentleness* and the *mercy* of God releasing His people from this body of sin. Charles Wesley got it right, you know, when he said:

"Ready for all Thy perfect will,
My acts of faith and love repeat,
Till death Thy endless mercies seal
And make the sacrifice complete."

I have not been present at many deathbeds. I have read the accounts of many, but I was present at my mother's deathbed and, if that was not the gentleness and tenderness of God, I do not know what was, releasing her from suffering and pain in the sure and certain hope that her body would one day rise like His glorious body. *That was mercy*. For the believer, death is part of the *gentleness* of God and the *kindness* of God.

In all these things I do invite you then to see the gentleness of God in His dealings with sinners. Sin is real, sin *must be punished*, for God has said it. But again, He does not deal with us after our sins. He did not there in the Garden of Eden. For, along with the proclamation of the holiness and the righteousness of God and the certainty of eternal punishment for those who will not repent and believe, there comes the gentleness of God in the message of forgiveness. And always there is the pointing to the Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head and to the covering that God has provided in the death of Jesus. Always there is the pointing to the divine merciful forbearance, the patience, and the truth that "God is not willing that any should perish". He does not have any pleasure in it — He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. There is the compassion that came through in the weeping of the Lord Jesus Christ over Jerusalem, and always there is the pleading that is expressed by the Apostle Paul: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

There is a picture that John Bunyan gives, again in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, of the Christian minister with the world behind his back and the best of Books in his hands. And what says Bunyan of him? "And he stood as though he pleaded with men." *That is God*. It is still to a lost and sinful world that He calls: "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" "Look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth." Oh! may we see His gentleness there.

Third, see the gentleness of God in His dealings with Elijah. It is one of the most moving stories in the Old Testament. We see the great *strength* of Elijah, the rock-like man of God on Mount Carmel, but then we see his sudden and inexplicable collapse at the threat of a mere woman. He, who stood before all those priests of Baal as they cut themselves and shouted and roared to their god, *he alone* stood before them, "I, I only am left". Four hundred prophets of Baal and three hundred of the prophets of the grove, and Elijah stood alone there in rock-like power. And then it just suddenly all went at the threat of a woman, and he fled for his life. It seems as if this was what we might call a kind of nervous breakdown (to put it into layman's language), and this poor man was exhausted and he went into the wilderness.

I find an infinite pathos in this, don't you? He prayed for himself that he might die. Have you ever done that? But, see the *gentleness* of God's treatment of him. He did not say: "Whatever are you doing, Elijah? You should not pray for death. What has happened to you? Stand up and be a man!" No. God does not do that sort of thing. I think it was wrong for Elijah to pray for death, but I dare not point the finger at him. I haven't been in that situation, and I think we should be very careful about pointing the finger at others, when we have not been in their situation. Exhausted and fainting and unable to face life any more, Elijah prayed that he might die, but God did not rebuke him. If rebuke there was in that question, "What are you doing here, Elijah?", then it was a gentle rebuke, not the sort of rebuke that some of God's people might have given. God's people often rebuke where God Himself does not.

What did God do? He dealt gently with this exhausted man. He sent an angel to him who baked him some food and touched him gently and spoke to him gently and gave him sustenance and not rebuke. And when the exhausted man lay down yet again, God repeated it, and the angel touched him again and he was strengthened to go forty days to Horeb. I find that *so* loving — the beautiful *gentleness* of God with His exhausted servant. God came to him in his weakness and exhaustion, and He loved him and took him up in His arms and sent an angel to minister comfort to him. *That is God. That is the gentleness of God.* Oh! beloved friends, it is still true. John Greenleaf Whittier put his finger right on it when he said:

“The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch Him in life’s throng and press
And we are whole again.”

Do you know that? To come in weakness and exhaustion and to put your head upon the bosom of God and feel His strength flow in? The people of God do sometimes come to that point where Elijah came, exhausted and at breaking point, feeling that they cannot cope and they cannot face life and, perhaps, even secretly longing and may be praying for death. It is not the sort of thing that we would talk about, but, when that happens, God does not rebuke any more than He did Elijah, but He does revive and He does sustain and He does act with gentleness and pity and love. He is still the same God. “For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psalm 103:14).

Still a fugitive, Elijah went forty days to Horeb and he lived in a cave, and there the voice of the Lord came gently to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”. Elijah explained his distress and the Lord listened patiently and He said, “Come and stand on the mount”. Then on the mount the Lord passed by, and we get this great wind which rent the mountains and brake the rocks in pieces. It must have been a fantastic sight — a tremendous demonstration of divine power — but the Lord was *not* in it. But after the wind there came the earthquake, but the Lord was *not* in the earthquake; a fire, but the Lord was *not* in the fire. Such was the display of divine power, and Elijah looked upon it all, but there was no message from the Lord in these things. “*But after the fire a still small voice* — and that did it! Elijah looked absolutely unmoved upon the raging wind and the earthquake and the fire; he did not cover his face for them. But — “*that still small voice*” — Ah! that was different. And Elijah (and I can almost picture it, can’t you?) heard that voice, and he did not know how to look. I think his eyes were filled with tears — the *gentleness* with which God came to him — and he covered his face in his mantle and stood before the Lord who was in that voice. It just broke him; it melted him; it softened him; it refreshed him; it restored him, and he listened and he received God’s gracious instructions. “Come, Elijah, there is work for you

to do yet." Oh! the *gentleness* of God in that! See it and learn that *God is like that. He is still the same God. He is still unchanged.*

Do we perhaps look in the life of the Church as a whole too much for the earthquake, for the wind and for the fire? Do we realise that perhaps the greatest strength of all in God lies in His infinite tenderness and gentleness? That He carries on, perhaps, His greatest of all works in the *quietness* of the individual, human heart. Repentance is not noisy; faith is not noisy, and the coming of one poor sinner to Jesus is not noisy. Ah! it is the still small voice that does that, and it comes to us when no one else hears it, and it says to us sometimes when we are exhausted: "What are you doing here? What is your trouble? What is the matter? Listen to My still small voice today, and you will find peace and balm and restoration."

"Breathe through the heat of our desires
Thy coolness and Thy balm.
Let flesh be dumb, let sense retire,
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire
Oh! still small voice of calm.

A final thought — the gentleness of God towards His people's failures. Look at Peter when the storm was raging and the boldness and the greatness of his faith. "Lord, if it is You, bid me come to You on the water." And Jesus said, "Come", and Peter stepped out — he was the only one who did — the other disciples remained in the boat. Peter's faith was tremendous — down he went and there he was — walking on the water. Then everything changed. One moment he was walking and looking to Jesus and rejoicing in his heart at this great and wonderful Lord. Then he looked away from Jesus and saw the wind boisterous and the waves rising high. And suddenly, terror filled his heart, and he felt himself going down into the water, and in utter panic he cried out, "Lord, save me!". And what did Jesus do? He stretched forth His hand and caught him and, listen to the gentleness of His voice — "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). *I find that incredibly beautiful.* Jesus *could* have stilled the storm. He *could* have made the sea like ice or glass so that Peter could still have stood on it. But He did something infinitely more than that. *He touched him; He caught him,* and Peter was *in the hands of Jesus* — that personal touch! That surely illustrates the *gentleness* of God — that He catches us personally, even at the time of failure. Peter should not have failed. But he did, and so did you, and so did I, and we have done so many times. But what does He do in the event of our failure, when our faith fails and we begin to sink and cry, "Lord, help me"? Has He ever failed to help? The rebuke is there — "Oh, thou of little faith — what did you doubt Me for?" But Christ had Peter in his hands. *Beautiful, isn't it?*

The gentleness, then, of God. Its essence is in His restraining and holding back His almighty power, tempering His dealings with us to our human nature. Now *that* is exactly what He did when *in Jesus* He came down, not in the awesomeness

of great might, but in the *lowliness* of the stable. In the Child at Bethlehem *see there the living and abiding* epitome of the truth that our God is a *gentle* God and, as we approach Him gladly and confidently in the Lord Jesus, we may know that, in fact, *His very gentleness is, perhaps, His greatest strength.*

May He bless these few thoughts and help us to understand and to experience that *gentleness!* Amen.

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Studies in Second Chronicles: Amon — the Son who Returned to Evil

PETER KING (Stanford, Beds)

*"O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.
Take with you words, and turn to the Lord"*

THE EVIL of Manasseh's reign must have affected the general culture of Judah, for no nation can go through such atrocities and remain untouched. Even the later change in policy does not redeem the situation, for the young Amon, only 22 years old when he became king, had two retrograde years in Jerusalem. He had seen, or at least learned about, both types of worship, but the influence of Assyria prevailed as the idols returned and the people again made carved images. It looks as if Manasseh did not destroy all the idols, a mistake Amon capitalised on (2 Chronicles 33:22), for he brought the same ones out for the people to use. There was not late repentance from this son, for he did not humble himself as his father had done in Babylon, but trespassed more and more. Those who live by the sword die by the sword, and Amon's servants assassinated him while he rested in his own house, suffering a similar fate themselves. We learn several lessons from Amon's brief reign, for he had an opportunity to continue Manasseh's reformed position and turn from idols, but his pride increased as the evil multiplied, and he did not humble himself like his father, a mistake which cost him his life and his kingdom. His unpopularity among his own staff reveals the man, yet the grace of God appears again in the young lad Josiah, Amon's son with a different character, seeking the Lord when only eight years old (2 Chronicles 34:3). Some suggest the end of Amon's servants came after a court hearing, for "the people of the land" put them to death, rather than a general uprising or revolution.

Lord, help us to follow Thee, in spite of the difficulties of the way

Light of Light

SIMEON, in his *Nunc Dimittis*, says that Christ is the "light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:32). In so doing he takes up the great prophecy of Isaiah 49:6: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

Simeon was deeply devout, a very choice soul, and possessing an unconquerable hope. He had been promised by God that he should not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. Now holding the Child in his withered arms his faith was vindicated. He had rested on the promises of God when their fulfilment seemed an impossibility.

Light is one of the dominant themes of the New Testament. John in the prologue to his Gospel says of Christ: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men", and again, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world". The Lord Jesus, in one of His outstanding claims, says "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall have the light of life". Without Christ life remains a dark enigma, a menacing mystery. We live in a day when false lights on every side invite man's attention, but instead of leading into light they only leave those who follow them in a deeper darkness still.

"Christ is the world's true light, the Captain of salvation," as one hymn puts it. What the sun is to the solar system, the centre of light, heat, life and fertility — that is Christ to the believing soul. "The light to lighten the Gentiles," said Simeon, for without Him they were sunk in darkness and error; they knew not the way of life and worshipped the work of their own hands. Christ came to give them both light and life.

Simeon also describes the Lord Jesus as "the glory of thy people Israel". God's ancient people had many privileges, they had the Law, the Covenants and the Promises, but God's crowning gift was His only Son. Out of Israel was born the Saviour of the world, "made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3).

Christ came to save both Jew and Gentile; by Him both have access to God. He is the salvation "prepared" before the foundation of the world. God's salvation, Simeon declares, is to be found in a Person — the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel was not some emergency measure brought in at the last moment to remedy a situation which had got out of hand. It was *planned in the counsels of eternity* — Christ's work was fore-ordained before the world was. God furthermore had been preparing His people over many centuries for the coming of the Saviour. It was only "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law". How thankful we should be that God has such infinite patience with sinful men.

There was a day when Christ, who is Himself the Light of Life, endured the darkness of the Cross. There was darkness over the whole land for some three

hours. The scene was so dreadful that God veiled it from human eyes, while from the Cross was heard the cry of dereliction, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?". As a result of Christ enduring the darkness on Calvary He has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

Horatius Bonar wrote a hymn in the form of a personal testimony, recounting his experience for the encouragement of others:

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world's light;
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise
And all thy day be bright.
I looked to Jesus and I found
In Him my star, my sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done."

If through grace we have been brought out of darkness into His marvellous light we have a responsibility to further the missionary outreach of the Gospel, remembering that Christ alone is the way, the truth and the life. Doors of opportunity for missionary service are fast closing in many lands. Time is not on our side, we need to heed the word: "The night cometh when no man can work."

Let us, like Simeon, seek to have clear views about Christ; of His person, "Light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made", and of His work which He did once on the Cross, never to be repeated. To hold such views may not be popular but they are at once scriptural and soul-satisfying.

M.H.

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Book Reviews

Five Points of Calvinism. William Parks. Old Paths Gospel Press, Choteau, Montana, U.S.A.; and Berith Publications, 6 Orchard Road, Lewes, East Sussex. pp. 111 paperback. £4.95.

This is a book which has stood the test of time. Its substance was preached as a series of sermons during Lent 1856 in St. Barnabas' Church, Openshaw, Manchester. William Parks was one of the clearest and most powerful preachers of the day and a man who earnestly contended for the doctrines of grace. *The Five Points* are expounded in an able manner and possible objections dealt with.

We are glad to see the book in print again — a reprint of the 1915 edition with a preface by Henry Atherton of Grove Chapel, Camberwell. We include in this issue, pages 128 to 131, a sermon by William Parks entitled "Exhortation to Watchfulness".

M.H.

***Just a Talker — Sayings of John (Rabbi) Duncan.* The Banner of Truth Trust. Ed. by John M. Brentnall. pp. 271 including a biographical introduction and index. £7.95.**

Intellectual brilliance, deep spirituality and a divinely taught knowledge of theology embodied in a man of gentle and sympathetic nature is the subject of this book.

Skilfully compiled conversational aphorisms precede "longer extracts" in which vital subjects are dealt with in remarkable brevity. "Concise, oracular and singularly beautiful; every word was a thought, sought out as a jewel and fitted artistically in its place" (Rev. Moody Stuart).

Remarkably, "Rabbi" Duncan left very little written material. When asked by a companion, "Why do you not write a book?", he replied: "I cannot write, I'm just a talker."

As with Bunyan, the pangs of spiritual re-birth were protracted and painful, but this experience, together with personal tragedy in later life, in the sovereignty of God, produced fruit everlasting. "For he being dead yet speaketh." A book to treasure.

J.C.B.

***A Book for Family Reading, Book 2.* Jim Cromarty. Evangelical Press. pp. 192 paperback. £7.95.**

This book will help to counter the dreadful "mish-mash" of satanically inspired multi-faith reading to which the children of an essentially Christian nation are now being subjected. *Family Reading* is a must for all Christian families.

There is sanctified humour, instruction in righteousness and an easily understood exposition of fifty-two well chosen key verses of Scripture designed to lead young people to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The author states, in his preface: "It is my sincere prayer that God through His Spirit might use this small book to bring young people to faith in Christ" — and we say "Amen" to that.

J.C.B.

***King of the Cannibals. The story of John G. Paton, Missionary to the New Hebrides.* Jim Cromarty. Evangelical Press. pp. 288. £7.95.**

Most of the material in this book is taken from John Paton's autobiography, edited by his brother, James. John was born near Dumfries in 1824. His parents were a godly couple, faithful in their teaching of their eleven children about the message of the Gospel.

John's schooling had its ups and downs but he came to realise the importance of education and he equipped himself as best as his limited income from work would allow. His work with the Glasgow City Mission was a splendid training ground for the hard life he was going to be exposed to in Vaniatu in the South Sea Islands.

Before leaving Greenock in Scotland for Australia and the New Hebrides, John married Mary Ann Robson, who accompanied him on the 4½ months' journey to Melbourne. A year later, Mary and her baby son died and John was left on his own. Grief stricken but determined, he continued to witness to the natives of their need of a Saviour. John spent nearly twenty years in Tanna, during which time he remarried and God gave him and Margaret several children, two of whom became missionaries in the New Hebrides.

Jim Cromarty, a retired minister, and a former teacher, has enriched us by his story of the work of the Lord in the New Hebrides.

J.C.

***A Book for Family Worship.* Jim Cromarty. Evangelical Press. pp. 176. £7.95.**

Having been in Newcastle, Australia, I was interested that the author had graduated at the Teachers' College in that city. He became Principal of a large school and his ability as a teacher is evident in the fifty-two short devotional writings, geared towards family worship.

The headings of each chapter are striking, so too are the encouragements to "Discuss", "Meditate", and "Pray". The illustrations are pithy, and the reverence for Scripture make this an admirable book.

J.C.

***Christ's Greatest Trophy.* Bishop J. C. Ryle. Evangelical Press. pp. 22 paperback. £1.75.**

We expect a high quality publication from the Evangelical Press, and this small book is no exception. First issued in 1879 in the form of a tract, *Christ's Greatest Trophy*, reveals the immediacy of eternity — a potent warning to the unconverted and the tremendous power of a mighty Saviour, even in the death agony of the Cross. It was said of Bishop Ryle that, "few men in the 19th century did so much for truth and for righteousness among the English-speaking race and in the world". Spurgeon would have agreed.

J.C.B.

***Ministry and Order in the Church of Christ.* B. W. Newton. Pearl Publications. pp. 127. £3.95.**

The Editor, C. W. H. Griffiths, has selected from the writings of Benjamin Wills Newton (1807-1899) gems of truth, about failure in the Church and how by returning to first principles as authorised by Scripture, we can learn how discipline is to be exercised. Newton has helpful thoughts on abiding and withdrawn gifts, how the gifts operate, and the use of particular gifts. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

The publishers have produced an unusual and informative book which I recommend to those who like myself desire the best gifts.

J.C.

A Guide to the Puritans. Robert P. Martin. The Banner of Truth Trust. pp. 532. £12.95.

The subtitle explains the plan of this reference work: "A topical and textual index to writings of the Puritans and some of their successors recently in print." The book is divided into eleven sections plus a bibliography of works indexed.

All the well-known Puritan divines are listed; for example, John Owen, Thomas Manton, and Thomas Goodwin, in addition to lesser-known men, such as Thomas Shepherd and Obadiah Sedgwick. Eighteenth century writers include the American preacher, Jonathan Edwards, and the English evangelist, George Whitefield. Augustus Toplady, first editor of *The Gospel Magazine*, is listed several times. The 19th century is represented by the first Bishop of Liverpool, J. C. Ryle, and the Baptist preacher, C. H. Spurgeon, among others. Modern writers indexed in this book include Dr. M. Lloyd-Jones and Professor John Murray. Among the living writers we find Iain Murray (founder of the Banner of Truth) and Erroll Hulse (editor of *Reformation Today*).

The section on commentaries and sermons is comprehensive; for example, twelve pages of books on Romans spanning five centuries! The topical index covers a wide range of topics from abortion to zeal.

This book is an invaluable resource tool for those who enjoy reading, and for Reformed pastors and Christian writers.

S.K.E.

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