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The Gospel Magazine



Christians encouraged against fear • The life of the Rev Thomas Adam • Adoption

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1766–2015

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.
Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

These texts, which have been associated for so many years with *The Gospel Magazine*, give some indication of what this bi-monthly stands for. We seek to present the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour for a lost world: to edify the people of God; and to promote unity among believers, ‘the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’.

The Gospel Magazine is believed to be the oldest religious periodical still being published. One distinguished former editor was the Rev. Augustus Toplady, whose famous hymn, ‘Rock of Ages cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee’, was first published in these pages.

The Trust Deed of *The Gospel Magazine* is defined in terms of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England, but the magazine itself is non-denominational. We aim to provide variety in unity, publishing articles from a wide diversity of past and present writers committed to ‘the faith once delivered to the saints’.

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EDITORIAL

THE Apostle Paul painted a portrait of his world in such colours and in such a style that Oliver Cromwell himself would have approved wholeheartedly; it was a portrayal of human nature, ‘warts and all’. We find this portrait in Romans 1:18–25, and it is followed by a depressingly honest description of the life-styles which arose from the reality of a world which had chosen to deny the revealed truth, and instead to pander to its own fondly-imagined notions. While our society has attempted to silence this portion of God’s Word as ‘hate literature’, it is in fact an act of love, for only a faithful friend will administer wounds in a bid to cure, rather than to hurt.

The great antidote to this picture of human sin, and its resulting misery, is of course the substance of the following chapters. Here, the Apostle lays out the glory of Christ’s gospel, as being the only viable answer to the problem of sin. The mechanism whereby sinners are delcared just in God’s sight, in a manner which does no injury to his holiness, majesty or law, is displayed in the most glorious terms. It is, of course, the doctrine of justification by faith, which was the theological basis of the Protestant reformation, a doctrine

much preached about today in some circles, but sadly little understood, and even less lived.

The necessity for faithful gospel preaching has never been greater. Two recent reports in the newspapers give some indication of the size of the problem today.

In one report, it turns out the Bolsover has a higher proportion of self-confessed worshipers of the devil than any other part of the country. The point to note is not that Bolsover is a hotbed of satanic practice, but that people are prepared to admit to such wickedness. True, some may be trying to cock a snook at the authorities for daring to ask ‘invasive’ questions in a census, but surely anyone who wished to make such a point could give a wide variety of less horrifying answers, than saying they worship the devil.

The other report concerns the opening of a new temple in Iceland, where the old Norse gods are to be served. There has, apparently, been something of a resurgence of interest in the old gods in recent years. This temple, the first in a thousand years, reflects this rise in interest. What is most noteworthy about this report is that Iceland was one of many nations which was evangelized about a thousand year

ago. The legacy of that spiritual blessing seems almost to have passed from memory, and not just in Iceland. A well-known personality from the world of television entertainment recently declared God to be evil, since he, by creating the world, is responsible for such things as cancer in children. Even the secular press was able to see through the weakness of his argument, and point out that, according to the Bible, the world was made good, but fell in sin. Disease, so Christians believe, is one of the consequences of the Fall. Yet for all that, this individual felt able to utter the most horrible blasphemies.

Christianity has, for some time, been losing its honoured status as the faith of these lands. To be sure, there is still a nominally Christian basis for much that takes place, from the Royal family, through the various levels of government, to the presence of the Church in every part of this land. More and more, however, Christianity is required to compete, on an increasingly unlevel playing field, with other religions. The bias is being aided and abetted by so-called scholars and religious figures who pronounce on the validity of these other religions. The Bishop of Rome adds his considerable and malevolent influence in these things, and makes it even harder for faithful Christians to maintain the uniqueness of the gospel.

How can the world see this uniqueness? Not in clever arguments, not in conferences and slick marketing, but in the daily living and

witnessing of Christ's people for the truth. The gospel, where it is the true, authentic, life-giving gospel, transforms lives. It does not make the poor rich, nor the sick whole. It does, however, make sinners right with God. Being so restored—born again—they live now as they never lived before. They count present things to be of little or no value, and eternal things to be of such value that they are worth losing everything in order to gain them.

In the end, and by the grace of God, this is the only reply we have to the fury of unbelievers, and to the cruelty of adherents of false religions. We do not come to this answer because we have exhausted every other, nor because we think that we must defend ourselves, but because this is the answer supplied by our Father in heaven. In Psalm 8:2 David wrote, 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength *because of* thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger' (emphasis added!). Note the point; God's way of dealing with his enemies is to put into the mouth of his little ones that testimony to the truth which silences all opposition. This does not mean all opposition melts away, but it means all who set themselves up against God know in their hearts their sin, when they are confronted by the lives and witness of those whom Scripture calls 'babes and sucklings'. Are you a babe and a suckling in the family of God? May we all know our place, and do our part, for the sake of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. ¶

The throne of grace is erected for a time of need, Hebrews 4:16. Yet when the waters of relief run low, and wants begin to pinch hard, how prone are the best hearts to distrust the Fountain! When the meal in the barrel, and oil in the cruse, are almost spent, our faith and patience are almost spent too. Now it is difficult to keep down the proud and unbelieving heart in an holy quietude and sweet submission at the foot of God. It is an easy thing to talk of trusting God for daily bread, while we have a full barn or purse; but to say as the prophet, Habakkuk 3:17, 'Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine, etc., yet will I rejoice in the Lord,' sure this is not easy.

John Flavel

THE GLORIOUS POWER OF THE GOSPEL

A SERMON BY THE EDITOR

'Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.' Acts 26:17–18

THE gospel preached by the Apostle Paul was not something he inherited from others, nor learned from any man, as he made clear when writing to the Galatians, 1:11–24. Rather, it was given to him by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, he was himself transformed by the gospel, going from being a persecutor of Christians, to becoming a persecuted preacher himself. This means his gospel can be discerned by its effect; where a person rightly receives the gospel, they become a new creature in Christ Jesus. They are transformed. All things are become new. They have a new heart and a new mind. They have a new view of the world, one now governed by the belief in a sovereign God rather than in chance or fate. They have a new view of themselves, rather than holding the common opinion of mankind—that we are basically good in ourselves, and need make only a little effort to become better.

It is this false view of human nature which is challenged by the coming of the gospel, and it is a hatred of this challenge which causes many to rise up against the gospel, and against its preachers, and against the Lord Jesus Christ whose gospel it is. Yet here in the words of our text we see that this is precisely what the Apostle Paul saw as being the most necessary work of the gospel. He sets out for us here, in a short-hand form, a comprehensive view of what the gospel is for. Let us hear what he says, as the Spirit gives us grace and wisdom to listen.

1. The work of the gospel has a present purpose

This is made clear by the words of v. 17; 'to open' the eyes of the Gentiles, 'and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins'. From which we consider two points:

I. About whom these words are spoken

Paul calls them 'Gentiles', the nations, non-Jews. Such are we. What is the significance of this? He speaks of those who have no real knowledge of the truth as it is revealed by God in his Word. Unlike the Jews, the nations had not, as a rule, received the ministry of the prophets. They did not have Abraham to their father, and so were not inheritors of the covenant. They were not taught in the laws of Moses, and so had no knowledge of God, and of his will, his laws, and his holiness. Such were the Gentiles.

Now, we may say that we are better than them. We have been brought up in a nominally Christian country. Many of us learned at school certain things which belong to the Christian religion. We may have been required by our parents to attend Sunday School. We have certain great advantages over the Gentile nations of Paul's day. But do any of these things make a real difference? Is there not a fundamental similarity between them and us? Are we not as ignorant by nature of true religion as they? We are as far

gone in unrighteousness as a nation as any of them. We need to hear Paul's words.

II. See what answer God has given in Christ Jesus

It is given in four things:

i. *'To open their eyes'*

This is particularly appropriate coming from the Apostle Paul. After all, when he met the risen Lord Jesus Christ on the Damascus road, he was left in a state of blindness. That blindness as a parable concerning his true spiritual condition. Saul of Tarsus was blind to the truth. This is the state of all mankind by nature. We are as ignorant of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, as the Eskimo is ignorant of the heat of the desert, or the deaf man of the beauties of music. Our eyes are closed to the truth. The tragedy is that we are convinced that we can see clearly. Unlike the blind man of Mark 8, we do not claim to see men as trees walking, but convince ourselves that we can see clearly; and that what we see is a true representation of what is really there. The gospel comes to open our eyes, to reveal to us the truth. Since the gospel is the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, it follows that it must be true, since he is the way, the truth and the life. How we need to have our eyes opened. How we need the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

ii. *'To turn them from darkness to light'*

Once our eyes are opened, we will see our surroundings for what they truly are. We will see that we are in darkness. The blind man knows not whether it is night or day, or whether the light is on or off. So it is with many. Being blind, they are ignorant of the true state of affairs. They do not realise that, far from wandering in a wide and pleasant place, they are teetering on the edge of a precipice. The waters from which they drink are not pleasant and clear, but green and rank. The food on which they feed is not lush and ripe, but shrivelled and mouldy. Being unable to see, they have invented in their own imaginations

a picture of the world they inhabit. They are very far from the truth.

How necessary it is, then, that we be turned from darkness to light. This must follow once our eyes are opened, providing, of course, that there is light to which we may turn. If our eyes were opened, and it turned out that there is only blackness, we would fall into such a state of despair that we would be beyond recovery. The gospel is light, and its work includes opening our eyes that we may behold the light. We must imitate the sunflower, and turn and follow the light wherever it may be found; not a false light, but the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

iii. *'And from the power of Satan unto God'*

Now we begin to see how vital it is that our eyes are opened, and that we are turned. Once our eyes are opened and we are turned to the light, we will understand that, until this moment, we have been the slaves of Satan. We have been captive to his will. We have been serving him, while labouring under the illusion that we have been free. We will discover that our love of pleasure is not the free indulgence of our wills, nor the lawful enjoyment of bodily joys, but is a joyless and a destructive serving of the devil.

Of course, the world at large will reject utterly such a claim. 'No', they will cry, 'we are simply enjoying our rights, our freedoms.' There is no understanding that the majority of human behaviour is nothing less than evidence that we are serving Satan.

The power of Satan is not to be underestimated. He has a strong power over us—not because he is a potential rival to the Lord God for control over this world, but because our fallen natures are naturally inclined to serve him. This is the effect of the Fall. This is the consequence of our inheriting Adam's sin. This is the power of death over us, that we are incapable of escaping Satan's power, nor of ceasing to obey Satan's will, by ourselves. It is truly said, that 'we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves'. By nature we are sunk in

misery. We are in desperate need of one who is stronger than Satan, who can first bind him, and then spoil his goods. We need the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel.

iv. *'That they may receive forgiveness of sins'*

Here we come to the means appointed by our Saviour Jesus Christ in order to bring us from blindness to sight, from darkness to light, and out from under the power of Satan. It is by the forgiveness of our sins. How can this be?

Consider how we became blind, plunged into darkness, and the slaves of Satan. It was in the sin of Adam. His act of disobedience corrupted his nature, and made him the servant of sin. We, inheriting his condition, are likewise the slaves of Satan. Sin has been imputed to us, and we are accounted guilty in God's sight. The only way to change our condition is if the debt can be wiped out, if our sins can be forgiven.

Our need goes beyond even that sin of Adam. Since we inherit his condition, we inherit his propensity to sin. We have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. We are guilty, both by nature and in fact. Our sins are of thought, word and deed. We are guilty for all that we have done, and we are guilty for all we have not done, as loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. We are guilty in that we have not loved our neighbour as ourselves. God is rightly angry with us, and hell is truly our due punishment.

But the gospel has come to show us another way. Jesus Christ died on the cross, the great sacrifice for sins, that all who believe in him should not perish. He died to bear away our sins. He took the anger of God's wrath, that mercy may smile on us from heaven. He has wonderfully made peace by the blood of his cross, and is set down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

Our way into the forgiveness of sins is faith. 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive

us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Why should we make the confession? Because the Bible tells us to? Because a preacher does? No! Because our consciences, once awakened to the reality of sin, cast about for relief. The only place where such relief can be found is at the cross of Christ, through being washed in his blood; that is, sprinkled by it as the Jews were at the sacrifice of atonement. Once our sins are forgiven, we have peace with God. Once our sins are forgiven, we can say truly that we have moved from darkness to light. Once our sins are forgiven, we can cry that our eyes have been opened, and that we now see Christ as the precious Saviour whom we desire above all things. This is the power, and the glory, of the gospel.

So much for the present work of the gospel. We need to consider next the future work. If Christ came just to do these things, we would be left with a most serious question; why bother? When we consider the treatment meted out to Christians by those who have another religion or none, when we consider the sufferings we undergo in order to follow Christ, we have to do so in the expectation that there is a future blessing. This is what was promised to Abraham; that his descendants would inherit the land in which he was to live as a stranger. This is the hope of Israel, as Paul knew it and taught it from Moses and the prophets. Let us consider, then, the future.

2. The gospel has also a future aim

This is also made clear from the words of our text. Paul goes on to speak of 'inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in' Christ. From which we consider two things.

'Inheritance.' This speaks of something promised and existing beforehand. He is no generous benefactor who promises to give what he does not possess. All of this is 'in me' that is, in Jesus Christ, in whom such sanctification, and so inheritance, are to be found. So this is something promised to us in Christ Jesus.

What he speaks of is eternal life. ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ This is the great desire of mankind, to live forever, not old, diseased, nearly blind, hard of hearing, and so on, but healthy, fit, and looking to enjoy a long life to come. Such a hope is beyond the reach of mankind, and always will be. Such is the nature of the world in which we live, that, even if science learned to preserve our bodies in such a way that they could be revived in the future and cured of whatever was about to kill us, we would simply succumb to something else. ‘Change and decay in all around I see’, and those words will be true until the moment of our Lord’s return.

This inheritance is the hope of Israel; and it is the hope of all mankind. This is what Adam longed for once sin’s effects began to be felt in him. This is what Abel longed for in his prayers to God as he offered that acceptable sacrifice. This is what Abraham had in view when he took Isaac to Mount Moriah, to offer him as a burnt offering as God had commanded. It was to this that the prophets pointed the Israelites in the darkest days of their history, when the judgment of God was upon them, and when it seemed that they might be about to disappear for ever.

This inheritance exists. Jesus Christ has risen from the dead already, and has thereby shown us the reality of this inheritance. We cannot doubt the promise. The dead in Christ shall rise first, and then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. This is a glorious truth, for it puts into a proper perspective the hopes and fears of this world. This offers us a satisfying hope, one which actually answers the real problem of mankind. Such a hope is not to be found anywhere else. Let us lay hold upon it.

‘Among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.’ With these words our Saviour Christ shows us why these two parts are needed, the present and the future. Unless we are

sanctified by faith in him now, we can have no part in the inheritance hereafter. This is the saving benefit of faith, that those who possess it are accounted holy, reserved unto the Lord, for his service. Those who are so reserved must then employ themselves in his service, being careful to be about God’s business on earth. God’s business is not violence or hatred, but love and compassion. It is not judging sinners, but declaring to them the good news that is in Christ Jesus. Such declarations, such living, can only be had by those who have faith in Christ. Our trust, our whole confidence, must be in him. He must be the Rock on whom we stand, on whom we build. He must be the living fountain from which we drink, the bread from heaven on which we feed. We must live for Christ day by day, trusting him as a child trusts its father to give such things which are right and necessary for us, and accepting the absence of everything else. Let us pray that we would be given faith in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Since the Lord Jesus came specially to call Paul to this work, meeting him on the Damascus Road, and revealing himself to him in such a remarkable and unmistakable manner, it surely follows that Paul’s words are meant to be heeded. This is no fancy notion, but the informed conviction of the man to whom these things happened.

It therefore follows that we must be convicted of these things in our hearts, which thing will only happen when the grace of God causes us to be worked on by the Spirit of comfort and truth. But our part is not to lie quietly until that moment, as if we are excused all labour. Rather, as the word of truth warns us of our peril, let us cry to him who never rests, whose eye is over all the world, and whose ear is never dull; let us cry to God for mercy and grace, that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ may shine forth in our hearts, to our eternal salvation, and our present transformation into servants of the Lord. May God have mercy on each one. AMEN. ¶

FOR YOUNGER READERS

C MACKENZIE

MAKING PLANS

I AM sure, that if you are like me, you will often be making plans. A quick glance at my kitchen calendar will show details of where we expect to go on Tuesday or who we hope to visit on Saturday.

One day last week the calendar indicated our plan to go out for lunch with friends at 12 noon. Everything seemed fine, the plans were in place.

But very suddenly our plans changed completely. My husband was up a step ladder, taking down a curtain pelmet. All of a sudden the step ladder buckled, tilted to the side and he was thrown off, landing in a heap on the floor, breaking a chair in the process. He was shocked and in great pain in his ribs and side. So instead of going for lunch with our friends, we were visiting the casualty department of the local hospital, getting X-rayed and checked over. Thankfully, no serious damage was done, but the bruising meant a lot of discomfort for several days. Our plans for the next week were upset.

We sometimes say when something like that happens that it was an accident. But we must remember that nothing takes God by surprise. Everything that happens in this world is under his control. He has, for his own glory, fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass. We may make plans but God can change our plans in an instant. God’s works of providence are his most holy, wise and powerful, preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions (*Westminster Shorter Catechism No. 11*).

James in his Epistle gives us some good instruction. Don’t say ‘Today or to morrow we will go into such a city’. Instead say, ‘If the Lord will, we shall ... do this, or that’ (4:13, 15).

The book of Proverbs tells us, ‘Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth’ (Proverbs 27:1).

God’s providence is at work all the time in our daily lives. God uses it to lead us and guide us and to teach us patience and contentment as we trust in him.

Even hard providences like falling off a ladder are under control and are for our good. ‘All things work together for good to them that love God’ (Romans 8:28). Joseph experienced some very hard providences in his life—being thrown into a pit, sold as a slave, wrongly accused and put in prison. Even although his brothers thought evil against him, he could say, ‘God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive’ (Genesis 50:20).

The Lord Jesus was taken by wicked hands and crucified and slain but God’s providence was at work there too. He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23).

That was in God’s big plan to save his people from their sins.

BIBLE SEARCH

Find the missing words. The initial letters of the correct answers will spell out the topic of the story.

1. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of _____, and not of evil (Jeremiah 29:11).
2. The Lord is _____ in all his ways, and holy in all his works (Psalm 145:17).
3. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became _____ unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8).
4. For what is your life? It is even a _____ that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away (James 4:14).
5. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our _____; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).
6. Him, being delivered by the _____ counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain (Acts 2:23).
7. But as for you, ye thought _____ against me, but God meant it unto good (Genesis 50:20).
8. Be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will _____ leave thee nor forsake thee (Hebrews 13:5).
9. O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy _____ of old are faithfulness and truth (Isaiah 25:1).
10. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for _____ (Psalm 121:8).

STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

P KING (Hailsham)

Chapter 35

MESSIAH WILL REIGN—EDOM WILL DIE

THE observant reader will remember that we dealt with Edom's judgment in chapter 25:12–14, so why is it raised again here? Edom (Esau) had a particularly bitter hatred toward Israel, and this chapter represents all that opposes the Church. At the time Ezekiel wrote, Edom seems to possess some superiority over Israel, but in fact Israel had the advantage. God had wonderful promises for Israel, despite their predicament, languishing in Babylon. Messiah must come, and no objections from Edom will prevent this history-making event. In Israel are the seeds of blessing, but in Edom the prospect of destruction, for when Christ came Edom's identity vanished and the nation ceased to exist. The wicked hatred, which transcended all hatred, was destroyed for ever. Verses 5 and 6 speak of their contempt for bloodshed, which eventually rebounded on them, when Mount Seir (where they lived) became a desolate and desperate place. The Edomites dreamed of taking over where Israel failed, the captivity by Babylone afforded an opportunity for them to occupy the deserted land (v. 10). God thought otherwise, having heard their blasphemy against his people (v. 12), boasting against the people of God (v. 13). 'As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee' (v. 15).

The wicked spirit of revenge continued into the New Testament era, when Herod tried to destroy the Messiah by killing all the little children, but the country (Egypt) which in the past had enslaved Israel now became the place of refuge for Christ.

LESSONS FOR TODAY

- a. Our enemies are always waiting to have a battle with us, but God has promised to stay with us and never forsake his people.
- b. The Church must be on its guard, for Satan uses every subtle means to sow seeds of trouble, and the 'Edomite spirit'—the carnal, unbelieving spirit—although doomed in the long run, preys on the Church.
- c. As Christians, we can look forward to a time when this 'Edomite' attitude will no longer harass our life, for Christ will destroy all opposition when he reigns supreme.
- d. The Revelation gives us a detailed insight into the victory of the Lamb (Christ), showing that, when our Lord comes again, no one will be able to stand against him, and showing that the evil spirit enshrined in Edom will forever be consigned to eternal damnation. 'And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season' (Revelation 20:2–3).

Christ will reign for ever and ever.

A SERMON

PART X

A VAN TIELE (1672-1749)

Supplied by A W DE LANGE (Scherpenzeel, The Netherlands)

‘Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!’ (Job 23:3)

BUT understand by this seat, (1) either heaven, which is the seat or throne of the Lord, the palace of His holiness. Whereto the faithful should send his prayers, sighs and tears and only there God wanteth to be addressed by his ones, as we see in David: Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle (Psalm 28:2). Or (2) the actual throne and seat of grace, where God is seated on in his Son Jesus Christ with all benefits of salvation by grace and blessedness to redeem sinners. There he sitteth to hear the sighs and complaints of his children, and there he showeth himself in all his virtues and perfectness, from that seat he declareth by the powerful mediation of his Son all blessings, from that seat he letteth flow down all spiritual waters of restoration, before that seat he justifieth them and declareth them free of guilt and damnation, before this seat they are clothed with the garments of salvation, of with the robe of righteousness, all sin is blotted out and are given a right unto eternal life. To this seat, thereof testifies Job, so he was assured and knew that he would find a satisfied God.

2. Would he come, not trusting his own perfectness before God, but coming as a miserable and needy soul, who needs everything.

When we hear Job speaking about coming, we should not think of an outward and physical coming. It is absolutely impossible to come like this to the seat of God, but we should think of a spiritual coming, being nothing else then

than believing and so nearing to God and the Throne of Grace, a coming with the soul in faith, by prayer and supplications.

And if we look at the case as we should, Job would show us more than a measure of the soul and disclose the state of his soul.

1. He shows us that he was far from the seat at that time, and not near to it and the faithful get away therefrom (1) by their own misbehaviour, not submitting themselves to purity of the Lord's holy place. (2) They get away therefrom by a too greater addiction to the things of the earth, by worldliness, being taken to much by care of the world. (3) They get away from there by sluggishness and neglect of the their needed duties and needed means of grace, whereof they do not use them with so much heartiness as they did in the first times.
2. He points out to us, that he stood still, neither going forwards or backwards, standing still in perplexity, and in holy affliction, desiring and wishing he could come.
3. He points out to us his holy readiness, that when he finds to come at once, to bow down before the Lord; and thus (1) he would stand up from his place and go out, look away from himself and from his illusion that has or is something, but to be small and humble before the Lord, just as David: O LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty... Surely I have behaved myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. (Psalm 131: 1-2). (2) He would turn

himself by faith to the throne of grace, and follow the lesson of his God. Turn unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. (Isaiah 45:22, Dutch rendering). And this in turn would be unto no other end, than to use the seat. (3) He would come to stand in trust and to remain at and before the

seat, in order to never walk away from there again, as he had done before, but to cling himself like Asaph to the Lord: Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand (Psalm 73:23). ¶

TO BE CONTINUED

CHRISTIANS ENCOURAGED AGAINST THE FEAR OF MAN

The Rev EDWARD COOPER (1770–1833)

Supplied by PETER MURCOTT, Douglas, Isle of Man

‘Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.’ Isaiah 51:7–8

THERE is no interpreter of the Bible so good as the Bible itself. It is by comparing one part of Scripture with another, ‘spiritual things with spiritual’ (I Corinthians 2:13), that we shall best understand the meaning. Thus the New Testament greatly helps to explain the Old. By the writings of the Apostles, we are not only taught to see the types, shadows and predictions of the coming of Christ, which we meet in the writings of Moses, David, and the prophets, but we are also instructed to understand and apply the consolations and the promises with which the works of these holy men abound.

Let us take, for example, the passage in the text. Considered by the light which the New Testament throws on the subject, and compared, not only with its general tenor and spirit, but also with many passages in the Gospels and the Epistles, the words may clearly be

understood as addressed by Christ himself to his people; and as designed to furnish them with support and encouragement under the reproaches and trials, to which, for his sake, they may be exposed from worldly and ungodly men.

‘Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.’

In thus applying the passage, I shall more particularly point out to you—

1 The persons addressed; and

2 The address here made to them.

The persons addressed

We have already observed that they are the people of Christ. And they are thus described. He addresses them as ‘those who know righteousness’, the people ‘in whose heart is my law’. If we were to search the Bible from one end to the other we could not find a more evangelical description of true Christians, than that which is given in these words of the prophet, when explained and interpreted by the writings of the New Testament. It consists of two parts.

THE FIRST PART

The people here addressed are those who know righteousness. The word ‘righteousness’ as used in the gospel has generally a particular meaning. It is used to show that way of justifying sinners, or of accounting and treating them as righteous, which God has provided and revealed in the gospel. Hence it is often called the Righteousness of God; because God has made it known to us: and at times the Righteousness of Faith; because it is by faith that it is apprehended and applied. Hence St. Paul, speaking of the gospel as ‘the power of God unto salvation’, Romans 1:16, assigns this as a reason: ‘For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith’, Romans 1:17; and though witnessed by the law and the prophets, it is now ‘manifested’ by the preaching of the Gospel.

Justified by Faith

Now this righteousness, or this way of justifying sinners, is by the righteousness of Christ, received by faith, and put to their account. By believing in him, Christians are accounted and are dealt with as if they were righteous. In consideration of what he has suffered and done in human nature, they, who by faith are become one with him, stand complete in him, Colossians 2:10. Their sins are pardoned; their persons are accepted; their title to heaven is restored and secured. Thus though in themselves unrighteous, having no righteousness of their own, which can answer the demands

of the law, they are said to have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith, Romans 9:30. It is in this evangelical sense that we are to understand the word ‘righteousness’ in this part of the text: agreeably to which interpretation, we find Christ speaking of, in the latter part of the text, as his righteousness: ‘but my righteousness shall be for ever’, Isaiah 51:8. And what is this righteousness which shall be for ever, but that everlasting righteousness, which he has brought in, Daniel 9:24, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe, Romans 3:22.

Seen and Understood

It is this righteousness, then, which the people in the text are represented as knowing. They see and understand the great doctrine of Justification by Faith, as revealed and taught in the gospel. Nay, they not only understand it, but they approve of it; they acquiesce in and submit to it. They have been brought to see that they have no righteousness of their own: that tried by the holy and spiritual law of God they cannot stand before him in judgment; and consequently they have need of some other righteousness, in which they may appear before the dread tribunal, and may come into his presence with acceptance. Thus deeply feeling their own insufficiency, they gladly hear, and thankfully accept, the offers of righteousness made to them in the gospel; and believing what is there written, they find comfort to their souls. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. See Romans 5:1.

Thus they know righteousness. They know it inwardly and experimentally. Compare their state with that which St. Paul describes to have been the state of the unbelieving Jews. He bears them record that they have a zeal for God; but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God, Romans 10:2–3.

Completely Opposite

Now the persons described in the text are in every particular opposite to the Jews here spoken of. The zeal of God which they have is according to knowledge. For they are not ignorant of God’s righteousness: and consequently do not go about to establish their own righteousness; but do submit themselves to the righteousness of God. In short, with the same Apostle, they earnestly desire to win Christ, and to be found in him, not having their own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, Philippians 3:9. This is one part of their character.

THE SECOND PART

They have the Law of God in their heart

This is the other, and a no less important part. It is a distinction, which peculiarly marks out the people of Christ. In that better covenant, of which he was the Mediator, established on better promises, it was expressly foretold, as one of these promises, that he would put his laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts. Let us see what this expression means.

The law of God is the law of the Ten Commandments. It is a holy, just, and good law, which is necessarily given by a holy, just, and good God, and is, in fact, a copy of himself.

In the Heart

God is love: and his law therefore is love. It enjoins and requires love: love to God, and love to man for God’s sake. To have this law, then, in the heart, is to have the likeness and image of God there. It is to have love in the heart. It implies that there is an inward disposition to delight in the law of God, to obey and practise it. It means that the soul is conformed to his will, and is desirous above all things to do whatever he commands. Now this state and disposition of the heart is peculiar to the people of Christ, as the following statement will clearly show.

Before the Fall

When man was first created, the law of God was in his heart, for he was made in the image of God, after his likeness, Genesis 1:26. He loved God, and was disposed, and delighted to do his will. But he lost this image in the fall. Having sinned, he no longer retained the divine likeness. He no longer loved God, nor his holy law and will. From that time the carnal mind, which means the mind of man in its natural state, under the dominion of sin, is enmity against God; and consequently is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, Romans 8:7. Far from delighting in its holy and reasonable precepts, carnal minds dislike them; regard them as unjust and oppressive; rebel against them, and strive to be altogether free from their restraint and control. Their secret language is: ‘Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us’, Psalm 2:3. Thus the law of God is not in their hearts. And need we be reminded what a dreadful state this is?

Surely if we reflect for a moment, we must realise that to have in our minds enmity against God, the good, the just, the holy God, to dislike his service, to hate his law, is indeed a dreadful state. Yet it is naturally the state of all men since the fall of Adam. They are all born in his image, after his likeness, and not in accordance with God’s. They are all born with carnal minds, and rebellious wills: nor is there any remedy for this dreadful evil, any cure for this inveterate disease, but that which the gospel provides. Christ is the only Physician, who can heal this malady, and can restore the soul to its original health. It is only through his grace that this great and important change can be wrought in the heart; that the carnal mind can become spiritual; that the soul can be renewed to the likeness and image of God. Man of himself is not only utterly unable to effect this mighty change in his own heart, but he is utterly indisposed to set about it.

The Fundamental Change

The people, therefore, in the text, who are described as having the law of God in their heart, have been brought into this state by Jesus Christ, and consequently are his people. His is the Person who, in fulfilment of his own gracious promise, has taken away the heart of stone, and has given to them the heart of flesh; has put his Spirit within them, and causes them to walk in his statutes. He it is who has put his law in their hearts. Being justified by his blood, they are also sanctified by his Spirit. Having been brought to trust in his righteousness, and to flee to him for refuge, they have been graciously accepted, treated as dear children, and adorned with the graces of his Spirit. Thus they find themselves fundamentally changed—

- They perceive that a work, to which they once were strangers, has been wrought in their souls.
- They feel that they love that holy law, which they once disliked.
- They see the reasonableness and excellence of its precepts.
- They long to obey it perfectly: to be entirely conformed to it in the spirit of their minds.
- They no longer knowingly and deliberately practise anything which it forbids, or omit anything which it commands.
- They condemn themselves severely for their earlier transgressions.
- They grieve and lament that they cannot fulfil its injunctions better.
- They pray daily for grace to enable them to walk according to its spiritual demands; and they look forward to heaven as the place where, freed from all the remainder of sin, they shall serve God, and do his will, as cheerfully and constantly, as the blessed angels themselves.

Such are the persons addressed in this text. Who among us answers this description, knows righteousness, and has the law of God

in his heart? Who finds within himself those convictions and desires, those feelings and dispositions, which I have shown to belong to the persons here described? Let all such pay peculiar attention, while we consider—

The address here made to them

‘Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.’

Let us remember who is the speaker of these words. He is the same divine Person who, in the days of his flesh, declared unto his disciples: ‘Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake’, Matthew 5:11. He it is, who says here to his people: ‘Hearken unto me’.

Encouragement

The address may be considered as containing an encouraging exhortation, enforced by powerful arguments. ‘Fear ye not the reproaches of men; neither be ye afraid of their revilings.’ It is here supposed that the people of Christ may sometimes meet with reproaches, and revilings from ungodly men. And this is very probable; for the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, is enmity also against the people of God. We have already seen that they who know his righteousness, and in whose heart is the law of God, are in some measure renewed to his image. What wonder is it, then, if those who dislike God himself, should dislike his image in his people? Indeed, it has always been so. No sooner was a Saviour promised to fallen man, but it was also declared that there would be enmity between the seed of the woman, that is Christ, and his people, and the seed of the serpent (Genesis 3:16), that is the Devil, and his children. And from the days of Cain, who hated and slew his brother, because

his deeds were righteous, this enmity has constantly appeared.

It has not always shown itself in the same way. Men have not always shown their hatred of God’s people by taking away their lives. But there is one way in which, in all ages, they have betrayed their malice and enmity against the people of God; and that has been by speaking evil of them; by reviling and ridiculing them; by fixing on them reproachful names; by inventing and propagating false and malicious stories about them. Thus they whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words; that they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not, Psalm 64:3–4.

How frequent this is in our own times! How probable it is that mouths will be open against God’s people. Do not those who know righteousness, and in whose heart is the Law of God, find this to be so? Let them hear the exhortation which the Lord declares by his prophet, ‘Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings’. Let not trials alarm or dispirit you. Meet them with boldness. Bear them with fortitude. Persist in the right way, whatever is said against you. Go on through evil report and good report, 2 Corinthians 6:8.

For Careful Consideration

Consider by what powerful arguments this exhortation is enforced. They who now reproach and revile the people of God will be quickly brought to an end. They are mortals, and as such they must soon die. The moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool. On the other hand ‘My righteousness,’ says the Lord, ‘shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.’ In vain do ungodly men speak evil of his

cause. It shall survive all their attacks. In vain are his people reproached and reviled. They cannot really be injured. They are founded on a Rock, and can never be moved. The righteousness which they know is an everlasting righteousness. The salvation in which they trust is from generation to generation. The Lord will never leave them, nor forsake them, Hebrews 13:5. He will at length perfectly renew them to his own image; and will put them in possession of an incorruptible inheritance, which will never fade, 1 Peter 1:4. With such prospects, founded on such promises, what reason have they to fear the reproach of men, or to be afraid of their revilings?

Are you tempted from the fear of ridicule or reproach to hide your Christian profession, to comply with the customs of worldly men, and so, in fact, to deny Christ? Resist such a temptation. Of whom are you afraid? Whose ridicule and reproaches do you fear? They are from mortal, dying men. Think of the precious promises, the unfading inheritance, and the crown of glory. Set them before you by faith. ‘Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven’, Matthew 5:12. Only let it be your endeavour so to live, as to give no just occasion for the reproaches which may be cast upon you. Study to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things by well-doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: that they may be ashamed, that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ, 1 Peter 3:16. If you must suffer from their revilings, see that it be for Christ’s sake; for your attachment to his service; for your obedience to his commands; and for your love to his people. Approve your hearts to him who seeth, and searcheth the heart, 1 Chronicles 28:9. Be faithful in his sight; and fear not what man can do unto you! ¶

If God leave you not in a necessitous condition without a promise, you have no reason to repine or despond under it; that is a sad condition to which no promise belongs.

John Flavel

A SHORT SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE REV THOMAS ADAM

JAMES STILLINGFLEET (1729–1817)

HIS character, as a scholar, was very respectable. He had learning without ostentation, and, to a good acquaintance with the Greek and Latin classics, joined a considerable knowledge of Hebrew and the writings of the fathers. But, though a man of taste, and well able to distinguish himself in the circle of letters, he made it a point of conscience to lay aside the scholar when he addressed his people, and studied to accommodate himself to the capacity of the meanest of his hearers, that none might be unedified.

His views of the ministry were serious and honourable. We have already seen how far he was from looking upon it as a profession of advantage, in the answers which he gave to his uncle and to the Bishop of Lincoln. He could not bear to see or to hear of the prostitution of the sacred character to such low and unworthy ends. A minister of Jesus Christ appeared to him a person devoted to the service of God and the souls of men, and, therefore, not at liberty to live after his own will, and spend his income as he would that of an estate; but, as this is appropriated to him out of the substance of the people for the labour of their souls, he is in all duty and conscience bound to reside amongst them, to lay himself out for their good, and attend to their benefit and instruction. ‘Meditate upon these things give thyself wholly to them’ was his standing motto for a minister of the Gospel of Christ.

His discourses, which have been already published, sufficiently show his ability as a divine, and the faithful manner in which he discharged his great office amongst his people: they are full of weighty matter, and are most

honest and direct addresses to the heart and conscience. The heart, indeed, was ever his peculiar study. Being deeply acquainted with its exceeding deceitfulness and evil, his attention was always particularly directed here. Hence it was the great object of his ministry to undeceive his fellow-creatures respecting their own imagined righteousness, to detect them to themselves, to strip them of their vain pretences, and to bring them in guilty before God and their consciences. For he well knew, that till this is done, Christ and his salvation are of little or no value. ‘They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.’

After the example of his divine Master, it was his constant endeavour to establish true humility as the groundwork of Christ’s religion. Not that affected resemblance of it, which is often put on to please the world, and leaves the heart, all the time, unhumbled, and only more pleased with itself, because of this its supposed excellence; but that true lowliness of soul, which is founded in a deep sense of its own sinfulness, and exceeding unworthiness before God. This was the humility which he laboured after for himself and others; a humility proceeding from a divine principle, and influencing the whole man. He pitied the high and inconsiderate profession of many who love to put themselves forward, and to be looked upon as somebody in the religious world; and esteemed the complaints and self-accusations of a broken and contrite heart a far better evidence of a Christian state, than the loudest pretensions of the bold and self-confident.

The practical parts of Christianity had ever his most sacred attention and regard,

and were strongly enforced as the necessary and inseparable consequence of true saving faith: for, though no man ever gloried more in the cross of Christ, or was more full and clear in maintaining the doctrine of Christ’s blood and righteousness as the only justification and hope of the soul, yet did he ever in the strongest terms inculcate, that they who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.

A strict and conscientious adherence to integrity and uprightness in all our dealings, and to truth and sincerity in our words, was a matter of high consequence in his estimation. Hence he entertained a very unfavourable opinion of the religion of those who could suffer themselves to deal in smuggled or prohibited goods; to neglect the duties of their station and calling; to gratify their pride, at the expense of common honesty, by living above their income; or to indulge in needless expenses to the injury of their families, and of their ability to do good in acts of charity and benevolence.

The religious government of the tongue was likewise a subject on which he insisted very strongly, I mean as to its regulation respecting the private concerns or character of our neighbour. Nothing seemed to hurt him more than to hear any one take pleasure in speaking ill of others, or retail slanderous reports to their disadvantage; and he would frequently stop them abruptly, by observing to them, that ‘the roots of the tongue lie very deep’, or, with that remark, ‘I seldom see a fault in another but I look for two in myself, and they generally are not far to seek’.

In the distribution of his time, and the regulation of his family, he observed the most exact order and regularity; not merely on a principle of prudence and the better conducting of his business, but through a religious sense of the importance of his time and substance as talents received from God, and of which he was sensible he must give an account.

His dress, furniture, and mode of living, exhibited a model of the most primitive

simplicity; so that in visiting him, you might imagine yourself a guest with one of the ancient fathers, rather than with a divine of the eighteenth century. Nor let any suppose that this proceeded from covetousness, or a base love of money; it arose from a conviction of the exceeding evil of the waste of his talent, a disapprobation of the sumptuous manner of living too fashionable amongst the clergy, and a conscientious care that he might have it in his power to relieve the wants of others.

In the private duties of the closet he was diligent and unremitted. These he considered, not only as a discharge of duty, but as indispensably necessary for the life and support of his soul, and as a principal means of maintaining intercourse with God, and gaining those daily supplies of divine grace, which he stood in continual need of as a minister and as a Christian.

His caution and great candour respecting others were also very remarkable, and highly worthy of imitation; and though he was firmly established in the Gospel faith of salvation by Jesus Christ alone, yet was he ever ready to make great allowances for men’s different views of things, and distinguished with much care between an error of the head and one of the heart.

His curate one day asking him what he thought of one of his people, whether the person was a real Christian or not; he seemed to take no notice. Some days afterwards he called him aside, and said to him, ‘Sir, you asked me the other day what I thought of the state of A. B., and would probably be surprised that I gave you no reply; but it was not through inattention. It is a point which requires much serious consideration before we determine on the state of any person; and then proceeded to give his sentiments with his usual candour.

This is but one instance, out of many, which might be produced in proof of that Christian deliberation which he used in his determinations in general, and of his particular and close attention to the cardinal grace of

I Corinthians 13, with which few were better acquainted than Mr. Adam.

The same grace of true Christian charity was eminently displayed by him in times of provocation. He was naturally of a very high and warm spirit, and evidently of very quick feelings in cases of this nature. But this served only the more fully to display the power of that divine grace which gave him such happy victory over his passions, that his meekness and humility were the admiration of all that knew him. A clergyman who lived in his family above six years, and had the opportunity of seeing him at all times, and in variety of circumstances, writes of him thus: 'I don't recollect ever to have seen his temper ruffled above once or twice in all the time that I lived with him. When any thing happened of a trying or provoking kind, he used to turn upon his heel, and say nothing, till he had thought it over, and examined whether there was indeed a just cause for anger or not'.

But this conquest of himself was not attained to but by hard conflicts, and in the exercise of much labour, watchfulness, and prayer. He was forced to dispute his ground inch by inch, and would often say, 'if ever grace was grafted on a crab-stock, it is surely in me'. In this connexion it would be injustice to omit his forgiveness of injuries. That which was formerly said of Archbishop Cranmer, 'Do my Lord of Canterbury a shrewd turn, and you make him your friend as long as you live', might with the greatest truth be applied to our worthy author. And often would he requite the ingratitude and rudeness of an ignorant and perverse parishioner, by taking occasion to do him some kind office as soon as possible.

But among all the graces which adorned his Christian profession, his patience and resignation under the afflicting hand of God, were most remarkable. In these he was peculiarly eminent, and exceeded by few that we have either seen or read of. It pleased God to afflict him, for many years before his death, with a disorder of a very peculiar and trying nature, which, through a similarity in some of

its symptoms, was, for a time, apprehended to be the stone, and the reader will find frequent reference to it, under this description, in the private thoughts: but, through the whole, the power of divine grace shone with a most striking splendour, while nothing but meekness and submission were to be seen in his deportment, and adoration and thankfulness heard from his lips.

A prayer which he composed and made rise of on these occasions will give the reader the fullest satisfaction of the truth of this remark.

His manner was rather peculiar, but it was easy to perceive it to be the result of much conscientious thought. He spake little; but what he said was full of that weight and gravity which bespoke the philosopher and the Christian. Yet this his taciturnity, proceeding also from great natural reserve, must be considered as one of his chief defects, and had its unhappy influence in preventing his greater usefulness, both amongst his people, and his friends in general; and he himself both saw, and often lamented it in this view.

Upon the whole, as a minister, he was conscientious, diligent, and regular; faithfully attentive to his ministry, filling up his office with great integrity, and adorning it by a suitable life and conversation.

As a Christian, he was humble, serious, and devout; a sincere follower of his great Master, sound in the faith and hope of the Gospel, and truly exemplary in every good word and work: an affectionate husband, steady friend, kind neighbour, and indulgent master: and, to sum up all in the words of the worthy clergyman, in his letter before referred to, 'If his real character could be held forth, it would well deserve an attentive review and imitation. And though it may be expected that some may think light of it, and others sneer at it, as too precise and primitive, I doubt not he will one day appear great, and be numbered among the worthies, who will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father'. ¶

PRECIOUS STONES IN THE BIBLE

RICHARD BARNES (Ascot)

WHEN Queen Elizabeth II was crowned at her Coronation in 1953, the 'St Edward' crown was used. The crown of pure gold has twelve precious stones around the base drawing its inspiration from, and representative of, the twelve precious stones on the breastplate of judgment of the high priest of Israel.

As the Lord had commanded Moses, 'And thou shalt set in it [the breastplate] settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings' Exodus 28:17–20.

'And they [the accoutrements of priestly office including the breastplate] shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute for ever unto him and his seed after him' Exodus 28:43.

Such precious stones were evident in the crown for king David where 'the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the precious stones': from 2 Samuel 12:30.

The fortress of Tyre was besieged until defeated by Nebuchadnezzar II circa 581–568 BC inclusive. Judgment upon Tyre was prophesied through Ezekiel.

'Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond,

the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee' Ezekiel 28:11–17.

Behind the scenes of the tyrant upon whom judgment would fall is seen the anointed cherub, Satan himself, who thought to walk up and down in the midst of the stones of fire whilst covered in precious stones. Though the anointed cherub was covered by a listing of ten in total, the tenth was gold and not a precious stone but a precious mineral hinting at a flaw. He sought to cover himself with glory but iniquity was found in him.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto John, tells of a new heaven and a new earth.

'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea' Revelation 21:1.

'And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out

of heaven from God,’ Revelation 21:10.

‘And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates

EDEN—HOLY MOUNTAIN	BREASTPLATE—HOLY PLACE	FOUNDATIONS—HOLY CITY
Diamond Garnet (Carbuncle —Heb. <i>Baregeth</i> as Glittering stone)	Diamond Garnet (Carbuncle) Possibly by renown a Demantoid	
Sapphire Ruby (Sardius — Heb. <i>Odem</i>) Emerald Beryl Onyx Jasper Topaz	Sapphire Ruby (Sardius) Emerald Beryl Onyx (Precious—Job 28:16) Jasper Topaz	Sapphire Ruby (Sardius) Emerald Beryl Onyx (Sardonyx) Jasper Topaz
	Agate (A Chalcedony) Amethyst Hyacinth Zircon (Ligure — Heb. <i>Leshem</i>)	A Chalcedony Amethyst Hyacinth Zircon (Jacinth)
		Chrysoprase (A Chrysoprasus) Chrysolite

The tabulated groups show that neither the Diamond nor the Garnet appear in the foundations of the wall of the Holy City. The precious stones replacing them are the Chrysoprase and the Chrysolite. As an aside the foundation walls end with four stones in each of three groups being Amorphous (Crypto-crystalline); Negative Birefringence and Positive Birefringence. Both Chrysoprase and Chrysolite are prefixed with Chryso from the Greek *Chrusos* for gold.

A precious stone only reveals its beauty in the presence of light. When not opaque, precious stones can be measured for ‘Fire’ and ‘Brilliance’. Both the Diamond (highest

were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof, Revelation 21:18–23.

The three major listings of precious stones in Scripture recorded above can be proposed as follows.

brilliance) and the Garnet (highest fire) render high readings for both Fire and Brilliance.

When the High Priest unseeingly selected a stone from the pouch of the breastplate to establish God’s judgment the brilliant stone (Urim) is presumed to have been taken for innocence and the stone of darkness or perfection (Thummim) for guilt. Whether for innocence or guilt God’s judgment is perfect.

Sodom together with Gomorrah was the subject of divine judgment when Abraham was 99 years old as ‘the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven’; Genesis 19:24.

Judgment of fire and brimstone is found in the book of Revelation.

‘But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death’ Revelation 21:8.

As also ‘the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet ... These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.’ From Revelation 19:20.

The lake of fire and brimstone for unending judgment against sin and rebellion and the agents of darkness appear linked in some way by analogy with the stones of darkness. ‘He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death’ Job 28:3.

The word brimstone (brim-stone) uses brim in the meaning of raging, fierce or violent. The lake of fire and brimstone implies the presence of burning ‘stones of fire’. The Thummin in the pouch of the breastplate is taken as the stone of darkness for judgment of guilt and punishment.

The Diamond is made of the element Carbon. Carbonado is known as the black Diamond, the melting point of which is estimated at 3527 degrees C. Although black Garnets do occur, the Carbuncle (Garnet) is the stone with the highest fire being both bright and glittering. *Lloyds Encyclopaedic Dictionary* adds ‘When held up to the sun its deep tinge becomes exactly the colour of a burning coal’. Together these burning or melting stones of fire and darkness may reside in, or point by analogy to, the lake of fire and brimstone.

‘And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever’ Revelation 20:10.

Those redeemed by the atoning sacrifice of the Saviour look to the new Heaven and the new Earth as ‘saints in light’ to remain

forever in the glorious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy One of Israel.

Of the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God after the foundation stones were listed, the book of Revelation continues.

‘And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life’ Revelation 21:21–26.

Jesus Christ, the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, is the light therein. Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, is also the precious stone of God.

‘Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste’ Isaiah 28:16.

Peter referred the elect known of God back to the promise of God in Isaiah.

‘If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone

which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath

called you out of darkness into his marvellous light' 1 Peter 2:3-9.

All who call upon the Lord and have been translated by grace into the kingdom of Jesus Christ are unto him precious stones who have been called out of darkness and brought into his marvellous light.

Praise ye the LORD. ¶

ADOPTION

WALLACE A. BELL (San Diego, California)

ADOPTION is one of the sweetest words in any language. I have close association with a very rich family who traveled all the way from California to Russia to adopt a little baby girl from an Orphanage in Siberia. My family went to meet them as they came off the plane in San Diego. I held that little baby in my arms, and gave glory to God. This little baby was being brought from utter poverty to abundant riches. The orphanage was like a slum. This little girl was to become a child of privilege. She has enjoyed everything that life could offer: a beautiful home plus a vacation-home on a lake, best education, music and the arts, travel, horses, and best of all a Christian environment. Adoption for her is not only an amazing story of God's good providence, but it has been the transforming experience of her life.

However, there is an adoption which is even a greater experience than being adopted by a human family. It is when God adopts a sinner into his family and makes them a child of God. This is an adoption with eternal consequences. This, as is the case in any adoption, requires a plan, a price, and a point of pick-up.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit planned to adopt many out of mankind for himself.

This plan is called in Hebrews 13:20 'the everlasting covenant'. The Father would give

those whom he planned to adopt to the Son, whose Name, in time would be Jesus, and the Holy Spirit who would proceed from the Father and the Son would call them, through the Word, into the Family of God. This Plan will be fulfilled perfectly, for God is God.

Listen to Jesus speaking about those souls whom the Father has given to him. Sometimes he calls them 'sheep', John 10:11,14-16. 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me,' John 6:37. 'My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one,' John 10:29,30. 'Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee; As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him,' John 17:1,2. 'I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me,' John 17:6. 'I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine, and thine are mine,' John 17:9 'Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me; for they are thine, and all mine are thine, and thine are mine,' John 17:9,10. See also John 17:11,12,24.

Listen to the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:2-6. This is not some truth or myth based

upon a single verse. It is substantiated by Jesus and the Apostles.

This is the first step in God's plan that the Father should give to the Son as many as he's going to adopt into his Family to make them children of God.

However, something has to be dealt with before he can do this. It is sin. All of these whom God will adopt are born as sinners, Romans 3:23, and verses 9-11. This, too, is plain in all of Scripture. We are all sinners and cannot have fellowship with God who is Light, and in whom there is no darkness at all unless this is dealt with.

A price must be paid to satisfy the justice of a holy God who recoils from sin. The Son will come to pay that price. There can be no adoption without it. Galatians 4:4,5, 'But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' 'Thou shalt call his name JESUS for he shall save his people from their sins,' Matthew 1:21.

Just think of the price Jesus paid: the Lord of glory took upon himself a true human body with a true human nature. He would be conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit. There would be no place for he and his family to stay, so he ends up, a tiny little babe in a manger in a cattle shed. This was the beginning of the earthly road for the Man of Sorrows who would constantly be acquainted with grief. he remained poor: Matthew 8:20. He would in all points be tempted like as we are.

The devil tried to get him to sin. He didn't, Hebrews 4:15. He was constantly hounded by the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Jewish religious leaders. He went to Gethsemane and his soul-pain was so great that his sweat was like dripping blood, Luke 22:44. He was betrayed by Judas, and led like a lamb to the slaughter, while his chief disciple, and most vehement supporter, Peter, sat outside and denied that he knew him or was associated with him.

Pilate, the Judge, gave him over to the Jews

and the Romans. He was stripped, whipped, mocked, and finally, as a sheep being led to the slaughter, was fastened to a Cross. He cried, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mark 15:34.

Here hangs the Son of God, the Lord of glory between two thieves. Why? To pay the price required by God the Father to adopt many into his family. God would pour out his wrath against sin upon his Son who became their Substitute. His was a substitutionary Atonement. He paid a particular price for a particular people. Jesus said, 'I lay down my life for the sheep,' John 10:15.

The Apostle Paul said, 'the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' Galatians 2:20. There's nothing universal about this. It's absolutely specific. Jesus paid the price that the Father might adopt a particular people: his sheep. The wrath that they deserve was expended totally upon him. Emmanuel, God with us, made the atonement which the Father has fully accepted. We know this because he was raised bodily from the dead, and forty days later ascended bodily to heaven.

This Jesus who came forth as a little baby from Mary, who had walked amongst the multitudes and ministered to them, who was led to the Cross and died upon it, whose body had lain stiff and cold in the sepulchre, stirred, sat up, stood up, cast aside the grave-wrappings, laid the head-covering apart from the rest, walked across the floor of the sepulchre out through the entrance into the broad day-light. The stone, had been rolled away from the door.

He showed his wounds to Thomas who had doubted that he had risen bodily from the dead, John 20:27

To others, he said, 'Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have,' Luke 24:39.

On his last day on this earth, Jesus: led his disciples out to a place called Bethany, and lifted up his hands and blessed them, Luke 24:5. He, then, ascended through the air to heaven, Acts 1:9-11. The victory had been

won. His mission from the Father to purchase his sheep had been accomplished.

He is now back with the Father whose justice against sin had been satisfied by his singular Sacrifice, John 17:4,5,24; Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55,66. Jesus is now in heaven in the same body in which he had lived, suffered, and died. He's in the same body in which he had lain in the tomb.

Just think, as you read this, he's there, Hebrews 9:24. The Scottish Confession of John Knox and his companions is plain on this: Chapter 11, on the Ascension: 'We nothing doubt but that self-same body, which was born of the virgin, was crucified, dead, and buried, and which did rise again, did ascend into the heavens where he sits at the right hand of the Father'

This is what the Apostle Paul is writing about in Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:19–23 and Colossians 3:1. However, the adoption process has not yet been completed. Yes, many sheep were given by the Father to the Son in the Everlasting Covenant. The Son, Jesus, has paid the price that they might be justly adopted, but as, in any adoption, there must be a point in time wherein the adoptee is actually picked up and brought to its new family and home.

This is done by the the third Person in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son and gives what is called an effectual calling. This calling is given through the written Word, the Scriptures, particularly through the Gospel. Just as the child is picked up to be brought home to the family, so the Holy Spirit, through the Word, brings one into the Family of God. One by one, those given to the Son by the Father are brought into the household of Faith.

In this way, they are actually picked up from the orphanage of the unsaved world and brought into God's family. They, for the first time in their lives, become the children of God. Before this happens, the Scriptures say that they are dead in trespasses; and sins, Ephesians 2:1,5. This calling is a supernatural act. The Holy Spirit applies the word with

his power, John 1:12,13. It's likened to the action of the invisible wind which we cannot see, but its effects are obvious. This is how Jesus described it to Nicodemus in John 3:3–8 and Paul in Ephesians 2:1–10, and in 1 Corinthians 2:7–1.

This is a mystery. The word in the Greek New Testament may be defined, according to W.E. Vine as follows: 'that which being outside the range only of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known by Divine revelation and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by his Spirit.'

We are not born as children of God. We are born in sin and shapen in iniquity, Psalm 51:5. As we were born by God's power, working in our parents the first time, into this present, evil world, so we must be born again a second time to enter the world of the Christian life. Jesus said; 'MUST', John 3:7.

The Apostle Paul testifies to this in his own experience, Galatians 1:11–16. This supernatural work of the Holy Spirit gives one the sensibility or assurance of having been adopted, Romans 8:9,11,14–17, Galatians 4:6. Calvin, in his Commentary on Ephesians 1:5–6, wrote, 'When we have adoption engraved on our hearts, we have a good and infallible pledge that God will guide us to the end.'

Thomas Watson, the Puritan, in his work, *The Godly Man's Picture*, wrote, 'As you would prove the new-birth, cry, 'Abba Father'.

Adoption is a crucial part in what is called by theologians, the *Ordo Salutis*—the steps in salvation. It is one of the links in the golden chain of salvation as planned by God. It is part of the manifestation of his Grace. Indeed, without it, one would not be in the household of faith. This is a crucial matter, for if we are not in it in this life, we'll certainly, not be in it in the life hereafter. Remember Jesus' beautiful and comforting words in John 14:1–3, 'I go to prepare a place for you.'

There's an old poem, or hymn, which many know, 'When the Roll is called up yonder'. Part of it reads, 'When his chosen ones

shall gather to their home beyond the skies.' What a blessing it is to be able to say, with the poet, James M. Black, 'I'll be there'. This is the final and everlasting outcome of having been adopted.

If we know that we have been adopted, we can now pray, not just 'Our Father which art in heaven', but 'MY Father which art in heaven.'

Another poem (hymn) reads,

Blessed assurance! Jesus is mine,
Oh what a foretaste of glory divine.
Heir of salvation, purchase of God.
Born of his Spirit, washed in his Blood.

What should our response be then, from those of us who know that we have been adopted? It should be the same as that expected from a child who has been adopted into a human family. Only our responsibility is greater for we have been adopted into the eternal Family of God.

We should be thankful—Colossians 3:15

We should be obedient—John 15:10

We should be helpful—III John 5.

If you have been adopted, ask the Lord to make you the best child that you can be in your Father's Family.

'Coram Deo' is a great slogan to live by. It means: 'Before the Face of God'.

DIOTREPES SYNDROME

SAM SEMMENS (Edinburg)

THE desire to have the pre-eminence dies hard in the heart of fallen man. Some have even sought it for their position in the kingdom of heaven. The mother of Zebedee's children, that is the two disciples James and John, required that Jesus would grant them to sit, one on his right hand and the other on his left, in his kingdom. Whether it was the kingdom of heaven, or a temporal Messianic kingdom that she and her sons had in view is not at all clear from this particular account, but from what we read elsewhere in the New Testament, it is more than likely it was a Messianic kingdom, but the answer that Jesus gave would indicate that he was treating their question as referring to the kingdom of heaven. That the two disciples James and John had their minds set on positions of regal pre-eminence is the main drift of our argument, the likelihood of a temporal or Messianic kingdom is very strong, for when we consider what is recorded elsewhere of their understanding of Christ's mission, we

see evidence that points to the fact that they were looking for a temporal Messianic kingdom. This particular way of thinking seems to have persisted amongst Christ's disciples right up until Pentecost, when they were filled with the Holy Ghost. Luke's account of the two who went to the village of Emmaus, on the day of our Lord's resurrection is in Luke 24:13–35. This account reveals that they had thought of Jesus as a prophet who would redeem Israel, but now the chief priests and rulers had put him to death, and despite the fact that there had been those of his disciples who had been to the tomb and found it empty, and that there were others who had claimed to have seen him alive, they still behaved as defeated men. It is to be supposed that since this was now the third day, and that there was no sign of his setting in motion this work of redemption as they had conceived and anticipated it, it would appear that as they saw it at that particular point in time, he had failed to meet their

expectations, for in no way did he now appear to be a King like David. It was too difficult for them to reconcile their vision of a King who would reign over them and their enemies, and this man who was before their very eyes, despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; a crucified prophet who although he had been mighty in deed and word was now, as they must have concluded from the nature of things at that particular time, was but a defeated Messiah. A study of the New Testament account of the passion of our Lord and Saviour indicates that the eleven disciples of our Lord were very much human like ourselves, and as Jesus said: 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken' etc., Luke 24:25. We too are slow of heart to believe what the Word of God has to say. As these two men journeyed to Emmaus they were trying to make sense of what had happened to Jesus, and by applying human reason; we too so often do the same, and sad to say faith is seldom in exercise, nor do we stay upon the promises that we have been given.

However, their deliberations on the subject were abruptly brought to a close, for Jesus joined them, although incognito as it were, for he appeared to them as though he was but a somewhat uninformed but inquisitive stranger, and one that was anxious to know the source of their mournful conversation; for we are informed by Luke that their eyes were holden that they should not know him. Entering into their conversation as any inquisitive stranger who wished to share their knowledge would have done, he pointed out to them how foolish and slow they were to believe the prophets, and so he proceeded to expound from the Scriptures that it was fore-ordained that the Christ should suffer in this way, and to enter into his glory. (Note here the Lord's words, namely, to: 'Enter into his glory;' (and not his earthly kingdom.)) It is to be noted, however, that what he said was obviously delivered in a tone of voice, and in a particular spirit, something that could not be concealed, for they said afterward: 'Did not

our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?' Luke 24:32. Surely, as Christians this ought to come to us as no surprise; after all, who can open to us the Scriptures like him who was the Word made flesh? No matter how the deceitful heart of man may resist the Word of God; the truth of the matter remains, and as it is written: 'So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it' Isaiah 55:11. Although these men were disappointed that they would not see a son of David sit on a throne in Jerusalem, yet we believe that the Word was at work in their hearts. This surely is seen in the fact that they must have known that at the last supper Christ took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me' (see Luke 22:19). It was no wonder then that he was known of these two men in the breaking of bread.

But despite all of our Lord's teaching concerning these things, be it during his earthly ministry, or indeed his expounding of the Scriptures concerning himself to the two on the road to Emmaus, they still retained a remnant of that mistaken concept of Christ as a worldly Messiah, and of his setting up a temporal Messianic kingdom. When Christ was about to ascend to heaven and to enter into his glory, and they were all assembled, they asked him, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' Acts 1:6. The Jews had always hoped for the restoration of Israel as a nation, and this they believed would take place at the coming of the Messiah, as indeed the orthodox Jews still do today. But our Lord's reply was, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power'. This was generally a rebuke of the whole question, for by it they were intruding into that which Jesus had desired to be kept hidden. The main point, however, is that their question was amiss for a

much more fundamental reason, namely, that Christ had come, not to restore the kingdom to Israel, but to set up his own kingdom; not by means of the sword, but by his conquering of sin, death and the grave. No doubt there was a desire amongst his followers for the pomp that would accompany a restoration of Israel as a nation once again. The eleven no doubt still entertained some thoughts of their own preferment that could result from a restoration; after all they had been his friends from the beginning of his ministry. In other words there was a definite presence of the Diotrephes Syndrome. What we must all realise is simply this, namely, as Christians we have a King, and within his kingdom there can be no room whatever for anyone suffering from the Diotrephes Syndrome, for Christ is the King of kings, the express image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature, he has the pre-eminence in all things, and as Paul states: 'And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence' Colossians 1:17-18. In our country today many of those who rule over us are so overcome by the Diotrephes Syndrome that, due to their megalomania, they have failed in all things to recognise the fact that it is Christ who must have the pre-eminence. What is much more inexcusable is the fact that the same failure is found amongst those who oversee the Church. As the outcome of the actions of the people in general, we can state, using the words of Isaiah 24:5, 'The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant'. Is this not so? Which of the Ten Commandments is not now permitted to be broken in one form or other? Throughout our land there stand erected Moslem mosques and pagan shrines, not to mention Roman Catholic shrines with their graven images; in these cases it can be said that, from a national perspective at least, the first and the second commandments have

been broken grievously. As for the third commandment, in private, on the street and on the media, it is being broken with impunity. Correct someone for their blasphemous language and the reply will be more or less that of the words of Psalm 12:4 that read: 'With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?' Likewise the fourth commandment has no significance whatever, be it with the population in general or our government in particular. Sunday is considered as but another day of the week. As for the fifth commandment, very little respect or honour is shown to anyone, be it parents, or those set in authority. As for the sixth commandment, not only is murder no longer punishable by death, but the penalty is often much less than that for robbery. The seventh commandment suffers the same contempt as do the other nine. Adultery, which tended to be an indulgence of the rich and famous in times past, and still is the case, is now endemic amongst all social classes. Theft of every kind is also prevalent, hence the eighth commandment is broken in petty theft, fraudulent conversion and many other ways that are involved and clever. The ninth commandment in like manner is broken, often for gain. As for tenth commandment; that is broken in so many ways that it fails good print to name them all. It is sufficient to say that if men did not covet, then we would see so many of our industries, and the advertising industry in particular, grinding to a halt.

What does all this tell us? Clearly, from the transgression of God's law, and failing to keep the ten commandments in particular, the majority of our countrymen are guilty of dereliction of duty, first of all toward God, and secondly toward their neighbour. Having abandoned both these responsibilities as a nation we must therefore incur the wrath of God:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven Against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Who hold the truth in unrighteousness; etc. Romans 1:18. ¶

STUDIES IN I PETER

EDWARD MALCOLM (Reading)

VI Suffering for righteousness' sake, 3:13–17

WE have seen something of what Peter has had to say on the subject of suffering (2:12, 19–21a), that we should only suffer as doers of righteousness, not of wrong things. To suffer for the latter is to be expected; to suffer for the former is a mark of our being called in Christ Jesus, and we are to bear such things joyfully, for Jesus' sake.

Peter returns to this theme, but from a slightly different perspective. What he is going to say here follows on from what he said before, but this time he offers two bases for comfort. The first concerns the likelihood of suffering, the second the limit which is imposed on it. Finally, he adds a word about the way in which we are to bear suffering, a way that brings honour to the Lord at every turn.

He asks, Who is he that will harm you? etc., v. 13. Can a magistrate find against you if you are acting properly? Of course, given the way in which certain pressure groups have influenced the judiciary in this country of late, we may be tempted to say 'yes, a magistrate may find against a person who has done no wrong'. Whether this is in fact strictly true is debatable; everyone who has suffered as a Christian that I can think of has broken the law, wrong as that law may be, or has been cleared on appeal. We expect to suffer from wrong laws; that is why they are wrong! The word translated 'harm' here refers not to an injustice, the blackening of our name, but to actual hurt damage through ill-treatment. So we should understand this question as asking, Of the things you may suffer unjustly, can any of them do lasting damage? If we are unsure about this, remember the words of our Lord; 'fear not them which kill the body, but are

not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell' (Matthew 10.28). That is the real hurt. Instead, we are to be imitators of 'that which is good', that which is of God.

Should the unlikely come to pass, and you be required to suffer, do not view this as a terrible misfortune, but 'happy are ye'. Happy, or blessed, as the Beatitudes have it. Note especially Matthew 5:10–12. This is the teaching which lies behind this verse. Peter heard those words from Jesus' own mouth, and teaches from the Master. Our undoing in such a situation comes if we are overcome with fear—fear of what men can do, fear of pain, of loss, of humility. There is another danger, that suffering may cause us to doubt the Lord's love for us, or our standing in Christ, or our very salvation. So he adds, 'neither be troubled'. Jerusalem was troubled when Herod reacted to the news that the King of the Jews had been born; they were unsettled because he was a capricious and potentially violent man. Our persecutors may do all manner of things to us, but the Lord will never forsake us.

Peter adds another Old Testament quotation, from Isaiah 8:13. There, it is the Lord God who is named, as here, though interestingly the critical text which underlies all modern versions has 'the Lord Christ'. The order of the Greek words would suggest that the most complete translation would be 'Sanctify God as the Lord in your hearts'. The meaning of this phrase becomes very clear when we look at the context of Isaiah 8:13. Judah was being threatened by a foreign power. From whence will their help come? They look for a confederacy, v. 12, a treaty with another,

non-Jewish, nation. No, says God, sanctify the Lord of hosts. Look upon his holiness, and realise that it is in and through him and his covenant alone that there is salvation. Peter is taking Israel's history as instructive for our own situation, and this, as we saw from 1:10ff, is Peter's general approach to the Old Testament. Let it be ours also. So he is saying that our strength, our defence in the time of affliction, is unwavering confidence in the Lord and his promise, even if the circumstances shout at us to look for another source of help. 'Hallowed be thy Name.' By trusting in the Lord in the midst of danger, we begin to hallow the Lord.

Whereas Peter has instructed believing wives to win their husbands by their silence accompanied by faithful godly living, here he calls on us to be ready with an apology, to give a defence, or reason, for the faith that we possess. This is not contradictory, for in this situation we have been challenged to give an answer, and we must not remain silence when so challenged. Our Lord's silence before Herod teaches us that he did not recognise the authority of that usurper. We are to give answer,

to show why we have confidence in the Lord even when all hope seems lost. It is not that we are pinning our hopes on God because we have exhausted every other avenue, but that we have begun in Christ, and will continue in him, *no matter what may come!* This is the test of faith, and this is why we must be ready with our answers. Note that we are to be ready—not with a riposte, nor with a counter-challenge, but with a reasoned argument, which rests in faith in Jesus Christ, and which seeks his honour and glory. We will only be ready if we have considered the matter in reading the Bible, and in much prayer. This is an apostolic command, so let us all obey it!

He appears to repeat 2:12, and to a great extent what we said there applies here. Just a word about the context needs to be added; why has Peter repeated himself? To remind us that we will be considerably less able to give this reasoned defence if we have fallen into sin. A troubled conscience is a great obstacle to Christian witness. Let ours be clear. God may allow us to suffer, v. 17; let it be for righteousness, not for sins which we have committed.

VII Christ's suffering and its triumphant consequences, 3:18–22

CHRISTIAN suffering differs from all other suffering on two important grounds. First, it must not be deserved, v. 17 (2:19f); secondly, it should be divinely ordained. In this way it follows the pattern of Christ's suffering, which the prophets were inspired to foresee (1:10–11). There is, however, a surprising aspect to this suffering of our Lord; the ordained suffering was the ordained path to ordained glory. I deliberately repeat the word 'ordained', since it is vital that we see how our Lord's suffering was all part of the will of God for what was to come; no suffering, no glory. When we come to 4:12–19 we will see that the same will be true for us, and so we need to learn carefully what the Apostle teaches here concerning Jesus Christ.

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, says Peter, v. 18. 'Once' refers to the once-for-all, unrepeatable nature of our Lord's sacrificial death, and is a bedrock statement for those who would hold the scriptural doctrine of the Lord's Supper against the gross errors of the mass. This once-for-all suffering includes, but is not limited to, the actual death of Christ. We understand by it all the humiliation, not just of his arrest, physical abuse and death, but even all that he suffered by way of slander and ignominy throughout his life. All his earlier treatment at the hands of sinners pointed directly to his death.

It is of course necessary to relate this to the previous section, in which Peter addressed the matter of suffering in believers. The 'For ...

also' formula of v. 18 shows that he is relating it, in that he is giving Christ's sufferings both as an illustration of suffering, and as a reason why we should suffer in the way he has described above.

He says that Christ suffered for sins. He has warned that we are not to suffer as wrongdoers, but as righteous. Christ, though, suffered for sins. Does this make him a bad example? Of course not! They were not his sins but ours. This is why Peter alludes to Isaiah 53:11–12 when he says, 'the just for the unjust'. Our Lord, knowing no sin, died as a sinner that we might be redeemed. By offering himself as our Substitute he has brought us to God, as the daysman of Job 9:33, between us and God, to plead our cause, and to reconcile us to the Father.

Christ was put to death in the flesh and quickened by the spirit. Some see this as marking the end of the incarnate nature of Christ and the beginning of his resurrected and glorified state. Others (particularly Calvin) see this as referring to the weakness of the flesh in which all die, and the power of the Spirit in which the righteous live. So, though Christ died for sinners who are under the sentence of death, he rose again in the Spirit because the righteous shall live. The flesh, then, is the outward man, and the spirit the divine power by which all who are regenerate live before God. This shows us that, far from threatening salvation, the cross was simply part of the means of our salvation.

So, says Peter, Christ died for the ungodly, and as our Substitute has reconciled us to God. His flesh died, but death could not hold him because, being righteous, the power of God worked in him to the glorious resurrection.

In the power of the same Spirit he was able to display his authority as the crucified Saviour. While v. 19 has been a source of confusion over the centuries, it is in fact not difficult to interpret. What is Christ being described as doing here? He preaches, but the word is not 'evangelise' but 'proclaim'. Paul proclaimed the lordship of Christ at Athens,

Acts 17. The effect was that some believed, while others mocked. Peter both proclaimed Christ and evangelised when he preached on the first Pentecost, Acts 2. Here Peter says that Christ proclaimed; he gave out the royal announcement of his kingship. To whom did he make this declaration? To the spirits in prison. 'Spirits', plural, without the definite article, never means the spirits of human beings; it means spiritual beings, angels and devils. Since these are described as being 'in prison' we take them to be evil spirits, or fallen angels. Note 2 Peter 2:4–5 and Jude 6. See also Colossians 2:14ff, and our Lord's open show of triumph over spiritual powers. So Peter says that our Lord's suffering and death, working the righteousness of God, brought him to display his triumph over the evil spirits, in a way that would confirm their coming judgment. What we are seeing here is the power of salvation, such that, once the work was begun in the suffering of Christ, it had to work through to its conclusion, a conclusion we know about but have not yet seen. All who are involved, whether evil spirits or sinners such as we, hear this proclamation. For us it is the voice of dreadful hope; for them, of dreadful judgment.

2 Peter 2:4f puts the fall of the angels before the flood in Noah's day. When did the angels fall? Consider Genesis 6:4, where 'the sons of God' can only mean 'angels'. The fall of the angels (if indeed this is what is being described) was brought about through sexual temptation. The fall of Satan had already occurred, and should have warned the remaining angels. Some, however, were tempted, and fell. It is after this that the wickedness of mankind becomes so great that God repents of his creating work, and promises retribution. God declared himself to be Lord by judging the angels and mankind, and by announcing the flood and by bringing it to pass. The proclamation made by Christ has the same effect. But, as in Noah's day, so in ours; God provides the way of escape for his righteous one. Noah and his family had to endure the flood; they

were not removed to somewhere that would not be flooded. Like the rest of mankind they had to pass through the watery trial. Unlike the rest of mankind, however, God put them in the ark, in a specially prepared vessel designed, ordered and built for the salvation of mankind. Those who were spared were righteous Noah and his family. For them the waters of the flood were not death and destruction, because they were shielded. And when the waters subsided, and they went out on the earth once more, all things were passed away, behold all things had become new.

This, says Peter, is how baptism works for us. It does not spare us from death, nor cause us to avoid the judgment of God on sinners. It does, however, provide for us such a way of escape that we can bear death and judgment, and will come through to the glory of the resurrection. Of course, this does not apply to baptism *per se*, but to those who receive baptism aright, that is to say, by faith. This much is signified by the statement 'not the putting

away of the filth of the flesh', etc. It is not our coming to baptism which saves, but the having of a good conscience, one that is able to bear the gaze of a holy God; not because it is sinless but because Christ will answer for it. This he will do because of his resurrection from the dead.

Can we be sure that our being baptised in faith offers us any consolation? Yes, because Christ, who died, who rose from the dead, is gone into heaven, v. 22, and even now exercises his ordained authority over spiritual and secular powers. His rule is not yet such that all bow to him, but the day approaches when they shall, Philippians 2. That he has risen from the dead and is ascended is the guarantee to us that we, being baptised in faith, are made partakers both of his death, and of his resurrection. His ascension and glory were arrived at by way of the cross. Our suffering for Christ's sake is the appointed way by which we will come to the glories yet to be revealed. What a glorious future that will be!

BOOK REVIEWS

Editor's Note: *We live, regretfully, in a day when most evangelicals, and most publishers, have abandoned the Authorised (King James) Version of the Bible. Rather, therefore, than ceasing to review most books, we try to warn readers by stating if the book uses other versions of the Bible. The position of The Gospel Magazine is that the AV is the best translation, from the true text, possessing beautiful and formative English, and that it has been a instrument of blessing to the English-speaking church for over four hundred years. That we name another translation does not mean we endorse it.*

SIMPLY GOD Recovering the classical Trinity

Peter Sanlon

IVP, 2014. 240pp £11.99 ISBN 978-1-78359-104-6

Readers with a knowledge of historical theology will be able to turn to many other books on the subject of the Trinity. Why is a new one needed? Because, argues Sanlon, the church suffers from amnesia. We tend to forget what we once knew. We are also more readily influenced by society than we may wish to admit. 'Most of the doctrines historically held as central to the Christian faith are offensive to the secular establishment. Many of them are peripheral to what goes on at our churches' (p. 29). This is sadly all too true, and not just of liberal churches either.

The substance of the book began life as lectures to ThM students, and is therefore quite detailed. The style, however, is easy, and complex matters are stated as clearly as is reasonably possible. Divided into two major parts, Sanlon prefaces these with a section on Engaging with God, which ought to be read by every theological student before, during and after their course. Part One is entitled 'The Simple God', and covers the simplicity, eternity, and omnipotence of God, and concludes with a section on God as Jesus, and the Trinitarian implications of the incarnation. Part Two is entitled 'The Relational God' covers the relationships within the Trinity, the history of the doctrine in church history, and, crucially, the belief among many that our Augustinian theology is really neo-platonism.

Finally, Sanlon shows how a right view of God as a Trinity of Persons will affect our relationship with the world, in the spheres of entertainment, work, ministry, religious freedom, mission and church.

Bible versions quoted are from ESV and NIV. In every other respect this is a valuable work for those who give themselves to reading and thinking through the subject.

EJM

From the Mouth of God – Trusting, Reading and Applying the Bible.

Sinclair B. Ferguson

Banner of Truth, 2014. xi + 209 pp. £6.75 (paperback or kindle). ISBN. 978-1-84871-242-3

This is a revised and enlarged edition of a book originally published by Professor Ferguson in 1982, entitled 'Handle with Care'. One would perhaps need to add 'updated' since Ferguson displays his current preference for the English Standard version, which was not an option in 1982. Whilst many readers will regret the choice of translation, in other respects this is an excellent guide to reading the Bible and applying it to daily living.

The book is in three parts and Trusting the Bible precedes Reading and Application. In the first part the author provides a thorough explanation of what is meant by verbal inspiration. Scripture is not a human object into which God somehow breathed his Word but something which God himself has 'breathed out' using the medium of 'human instruments'. Furthermore, when God 'communicates with us he does so in a medium that is consistent with his own being, yet at the same time calibrated to our modes of communication and levels of understanding.' Ferguson also covers the formation of the canon of scripture and questions of inerrancy, authority and finality in this opening part.

Part 2 is useful on ways not to read the Bible, notably looking for abstruse meanings when the plain natural sense is quite adequate. The example given here is Rahab's Scarlet Cord. We are also warned against using Scripture as a 'promise-box' but rather to 'learn how to think, feel and act in a God-honouring way every day'. The chapter entitled 'Keys' is central to Ferguson's argument and he identifies five such keys – the analogy being with the keys on a piano rather than keys to unlock the meaning of the Bible. These are: context, Jesus, the unfolding drama, biblical logic and literary character. The author defines the various genres of Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments and concludes the second part with a sample Bible study, taking the Book of Ruth.

In the final part Ferguson takes Paul's well-known advice to Timothy and examines Scripture as profitable for teaching, reproof (not 'disapproving of others!'), correcting and training in righteousness. The necessity of hearing the Word is also explored through a detailed exposition of the Parable of the Sower and finally some practical advice is given on methods of reading the Bible. The appendices include a reading plans, as well as two classic extracts from the writings of John Murray and John Newton on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

JBD

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