

# THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

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*Incorporating the Protestant Beacon and The British Protestant*

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New Series  
No. 1570

MAY — JUNE 1993

Old Series  
No. 2570

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## *Editorial*

May I bring to you a word of **encouragement**? There is much that makes for depression today both in the nation and on the religious scene.

I find great encouragement in these words of the apostle “be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). We should note that this was addressed to believers — “my beloved brethren”. Christian service is described as “the work of the Lord”; it is well for us to remember this.

God’s work is never easy — the devil sees to that. We need to guard against the temptation to give up or to become frustrated.

We must be **resolute** — “steadfast”. Here is a call to personal faithfulness. We need to have settled convictions and principles and not to be tossed about with every wind of doctrine. We need to be rooted and built up and stablished in the faith.

We should be **reliable** — “immoveable”. We are not to be fickle and go from one thing to another. It was said of Bishop Ryle that he was “a man of granite with the heart of a child”.

Further, we should be **resourceful** — “always abounding”. In Christian work we must never work to rule, we should be active and diligent, using our time and our gifts to the best advantage. We are not to be slothful but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

Christian service is never wasted or to no purpose. We have the assurance that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. Let this thought be a constant source of challenge and encouragement to us.

# Four Key Words

A Sermon by the Editor

*"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." 1 Peter 1:8 & 9.*

None of us have seen our Lord Jesus Christ as Peter saw Him, so, to Peter, as to the other disciples, our Lord was a physical presence. They had eaten and drunk with Him. They had trudged the dusty roads of Galilee; they had sat at His feet and drunk in His gracious words and ministry. Sometimes we are apt to envy them the privilege. We say "If only we had seen Jesus with our mortal eyes how different it would be. If we could have lived with Him and talked with Him and consulted Him about our personal difficulties that tangle our lives: How different we say it would be. Why, one single day with Jesus would solve all our private problems and straighten out our spiritual confusion." Yet as the poet said,

"Dim tracts of time divide  
Those golden days from me."

If only! But, natural as such thoughts may be, they are really mistaken, for they forget one essential fact that Jesus Christ is alive today. He is risen from the dead; He is alive. He is more free than He was in the days of Galilee, nearer to His own than when they walked through the cornfields and in the vineyards and kept vigil beneath the Syrian sky. We can still see Christ today with the eye of faith. "Whom having not seen ye love" says Peter. You remember how it is put so well in Horatius Bonar's lovely hymn,

"Here O my Lord I see Thee face to face  
Here faith would grasp and handle things unseen  
Here grasp with firmer hands the eternal grace  
And all my weariness upon Thee lean."

It is possible to see Christ with the eye of faith and, as someone else has put it,

"And earth has ne'er so dear a spot  
As where I meet with Thee"

And wasn't it William Cowper who says,

"Jesus, where'er Thy people meet  
There they behold Thy mercy seat."

Yes, the cry of our heart is, "Sir, we would see Jesus." It is no myth or make-believe when men declare that they have met with and found the Lord Jesus Christ. "Whom, having not seen, ye love." Look at Peter's message. What is the main thrust of it? Peter is seeking to define the essential Christian experience and condensing it to a single sentence. Notice Peter has packed into these two verses four short, decisive verbs. Notice them.

"You love." "You believe." "You rejoice." "You receive," and that's what it means to be a Christian. It is a four-fold progression.

Christian experience explained in four key-words.

Peter says "Whom, having not seen, **ye love**." The first thing, we love the Lord. Pause and ask the question, "What, in essence, is the Gospel? What is it? Let us answer it negatively for a moment. It is not a philosophy of life, though it will provide one. The Christian message is ultimately the only thing that can make sense of the universe. It is only when you have the Gospel in its right place we get a right understanding of life today. When the storms arise and beat against us and when hope lies wrecked in the dust philosophy won't be any use to you then. Nor is it a moral Code, as so many seem to think it is, though, of course, the Gospel does provide us with that. It is a most sublime and noble ethic in the world. It is lofty, and yet, men are never set on fire by things so distant and impersonal as moral maxims or ethics and idealism. Something more is needed than that. Nor is it a social creed as again so many seem to think in our own day. It has indeed had an uplifting effect on mankind. Think of what the Evangelicals did in their abolishing of slavery, the Factory Acts and so on. Read the history of the Evangelical Party by G. R. Balleine and it will give you some idea of what the Gospel did, but all this, in a sense, is a side-product, not as a main object.

What, then, is the Gospel? Peter says the first thing is "love" to Christ. This is the essential of the Gospel, a personal attachment to our Lord Jesus Christ, and, without that, there is no vitality in our religion. Do you remember that searching question that our Lord put to Peter? There was never a more searching question "Simon Peter, lovest thou Me?" As simple as that, yet very far-reaching and very profound.

Knowledge and orthodoxy and correct views are all good and essential but of themselves they are insufficient. Without love to Christ we are not believers. This is how Paul put it when he was describing that which motivated him and sent him on his great task of evangelism, he said "The love of Christ constraineth us." Love to Christ is no secret, hidden thing. Like light it will be seen and like heat it will be felt. It is not some vague abstraction but a wonderful affection. It is not an argument but a friendship. You remember how John put it "We love Him because He first loved us", and we sometimes speak of love at first sight. Two lives are brought together, each knows the other as life's complement — only a look and love was born. And isn't that true on the spiritual level?, Here's the first thing, Peter is saying, as a mark of definite Christian experience, love to Christ. We need to pause and ask "Do I know anything of love to Christ?" Not just admiration of Him as a figure of history or a great religious Leader. It is something far above that. Do we love Him because He first loved us?

Notice the second thing Peter goes on to say "Whom ye love, although ye see Him **not yet believing**". This is the second thing belief. In the Bible and the New Testament particularly when it speaks of belief and faith it doesn't just mean an intellectual assent to a theory, but it means a committal of life. James had a startling thing to say in his Epistle. He says about barren orthodoxy and barren so-called faith he says, "Why the devils also believe and tremble." They go so far and they tremble. The New Testament belief is not just an acceptance of a set of dogmas. There is more to it than that, and Martin Luther put it like this "The only faith which makes a man a Christian is that which casts itself on God for life or death." It is a committal.

Look again at this word 'believe'. It is a figure that is suggested of a leaning posture. It is an idea of dependence, a confident resting of our weight on the Christ who has loved

us and given Himself for us. "Faith" itself, says Paul, "the gift of God." Faith too is the response to the Divine grace. Faith is putting our trust in and relying upon the Lord for what He has done for us, believing He has died for our sins and rose again for our justification. What was the message that Paul gave to the startled and the convicted Philippian Jailor when he cried out at that midnight hour, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And it was so terribly simple, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." That is the message to the convicted sinner and by means of faith we receive the blessing of the Gospel. Faith brings us into a living union with God. Faith is the hand that reaches out and takes the proffered blessing, and the New Testament goes on to say that, God-given faith affects our life and character. It is a belief that behaves. It is not just sentimentalism. It is a life that is brought into touch with God and a life that is consistent with what we believe.

So we need to ask the second question, not only 'Do I love?' but 'Do I believe?' to the saving of the soul'.

Then will you notice, thirdly. He goes on to say, "Believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable." Just look back to v.6, and he has touched on that thought there. He says "Wherein ye greatly rejoice though now if need be ye are in heaviness through manifold temptation, but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's suffering that when His glory shall be revealed ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." This is the dominant note and says Peter, "Rejoice." Notice he does not blink at the hard and painful facts of life v.6. "Ye rejoice greatly although ye are in heaviness." This is the paradox. We can be going through the mill, going through trial and yet have a deep rejoicing in the Lord. We cannot be truly happy until we are really His. Have you ever thought of it that the New Testament is the most joyous Book that was ever written. It deals with men who were committed to the hilt — they had crossed their Rubicorn. They sang their Hallelujah Choruses across the world and many of them went singing to their death. They "rejoiced with joy unspeakable." Yet today many people have got it all out of perspective. They seem to think that being a Christian is a tame, hum drum sheltered monotony. Here is Peter writing to encourage these Christians who are facing the most rigorous persecution instigated by Nero and he says "Although this is your outward experience yet inwardly you can rejoice;" Rejoicing with joy unspeakable. And this is not just Peter's word. Take up the Pauline Epistles and you will find the note is there just the same. Think of Paul when he is concluding his Letter to the Church at Philippi while he is in prison, a man under sentence of death, looking death in the face and what does he say "Rejoice in the Lord". I think when he wrote it he felt "Well, my readers will wonder if I am exaggerating the point, so he says "but again I say rejoice." Go back again to the Philippian jailor, what happened when he embraced the Gospel, he rejoiced. It didn't make him miserable. What about the Ethiopian eunuch to whom Philip ministered and opened and expounded to him the great prophetic Scriptures in Isaiah? The eunuch we read "Went on his way rejoicing." What about Paul and Silas when they were in the inner prison at Philippi? Physically they were below par — they were smarting and bleeding from the treatment they had received. What did they do? Sick and moan? Call down the wrath of heaven upon them? We read "At midnight they prayed and sang praises to God and the prisoners heard them." They praised God even there for His goodness. What about John Bunyan? And how we are indebted and shall be indebted to the end of time to this great but humble man who has enriched our lives with his writings. He wrote "Pilgrims Progress" and "Grace Abounding" in the prison in Bedford and even there he could speak of the

overflowing of God's peace and joy in the midst of trial. What about Samuel Rutherford another prisoner for Christ in covenanting days in Scotland. Take up his Letters that have been republished fairly recently. There is not a moan or groan in them but this sense of rejoicing, and they were written in prison. Oh have you got hold of this word "Rejoice with joy unspeakable". When you come to think of it all the deepest and richest things of life are unspeakable. They cannot be put into words. Take, for instance, a mother's love. Who can adequately describe it? No-one yet has been able to invent a symbol to express it. It is something wonderful, something that cannot be put into words, something unspeakable. How much more, then, this joy that Christ gives. Isn't it interesting that Paul speaks of God's peace as something that passes our understanding, and here Peter speaks of joy which is something unspeakable.

"But what to those who find ah! this  
Nor tongue nor pen can show  
The love of Jesus what it is,  
None but His love ones know."

We have looked at three of these words, love, believe, rejoice, and notice the last word, in v.9, "**Receiving** the end of your faith even the salvation of your souls." "Receive". Now salvation and Saviour are become rather threadbare words but oh that we could grasp the meaning throbbing in them, "Receiving the end of your faith even the salvation of your souls". Salvation is a wonderful thing. It covers past, present and future.

Dealing with the past — sin has been blotted out — forgiveness is experienced — "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." It also has a present meaning. We are being saved as a present daily experience, and it has a future meaning, we shall one day be saved from the very presence of sin. And what does Peter say of this salvation? It is salvation received, "Receiving the end of your faith". We don't win it; we can't do that. We can't earn it because it is not a wage. We can't buy it, because it is not for sale. It is something to be received as a free gift. Do you remember John as he comes to the end of his prologue to his Gospel? He says "But to as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God." What is Paul when he is writing to the Colossians saying? He says "Ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, therefore" he says "being built up in Him." If we receive this salvation of which the New Testament and the Old Testament are so full, we can only receive it with a bowed head and broken spirit and take it as a free gift from God.

How do we stand as we look at these four marks of a Christian. These are questions we need to put to ourselves. Do we love Christ, do we really believe, do we rejoice, have we received the salvation that has been so graciously and so freely provided? Here are questions we need to put to ourselves and not rest until we find a satisfactory answer.

Take with you these words. "Whom having not seen ye love, who though now ye see Him not yet rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, Receiving the end of your faith even the salvation of your souls." May God write His Word upon all our hearts for His Name's sake. Amen.

# Four Great Things

C. B. HARRIS (Long Eaton, Nottingham)

## 1 John Ch 3. verses 1-3

The first three verses of this chapter surely are overwhelming in their vastness. Who can comprehend these things without the gracious enabling of the Holy Spirit?

### 1. A GREAT LOVE.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us".

John is truly overwhelmed by this panoramic view. It is breathtaking in its vastness. It causes him to be speechless. "Lost in wonder love and praise".

We need to rivet our attention on the word BEHOLD. "Look and see", but this does not bring out the true force and wonder of the subject.

A "look" can be of a casual nature, but to "behold" is even more wonderful.

We are reminded of two things.

#### i. The quality of that love.

"What manner of love"

a. From all Eternity. "I have loved thee with an Everlasting love".

b. Undeserved and unmerited. "Depth of mercy can there be. . . ."

c. Unknowable. "The love of Christ which passeth knowledge".

#### ii. The quantity of that love.

"Hath bestowed upon us".

The word BESTOWED is very telling and powerful. It means to DRENCH or to POUR OUT. The same word is used in 2 Cor. ch 8.1-4 where Paul speaks of the giving and liberality of the Macedonian Churches. They gave freely not counting the cost.

As we meditate on these words surely we need to ask ourselves three questions.

a. Do we take these things all for granted.?

b. Have we lost something of the sense of wonder and awe.?

c. Has it affected our lives and simulated our love for such a Saviour.?

### 2. A GREAT MIRACLE.

"That we should be called the sons of God".

The word CALLED is of special significance, and rich in meaning.

It has within it the meaning;

#### a. Called — Effectually.

As in Gal. 1:15. "But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace".

It has also the note of Adoption, and those who have been adopted know it.

The words of Thomas Watson are very precious on this theme.

1. That God should adopt us when He had a Son of His own.

2. What we were before we were adopted.
3. The cost of our adoption.
4. God should adopt His enemies.
5. That God should take such great numbers out of the devil's family.
6. The great honour He should give us.

Dr Leighton on the theme of Effectually Called says. "This is a call that goes deeper than the ear, a word spoken home to within, a touch of the Spirit of God on the heart, which has a magnetic power to draw it, so that it cannot choose but follow, and yet freely and sweetly chooses to follow; doth most gladly open to let in Jesus Christ and his sweet government".

*b. Called — Embraced.*

A son of God. Owned and named thus. As in Gal. 4:7. "Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son, and if a son an heir of God through Christ".

Isaac Watts sums it up so eloquently in his hymn.

"Behold that wondrous grace,  
The Father hath bestowed  
On sinners of a mortal race,  
To call them sons of God."

*c. Called — Experimentally.*

"Now are we the sons of God".

Enjoy the present reality of such a relationship. As in Eph. 2. "And hath raised us up together and made us sit in heavenly places. . . ." Rejoice this is your present position by grace.

As in Rom. 8:14. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God".

Because you ARE the sons of God hence you "have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry — Abba Father".

"I lift my heart to Thee, Saviour Divine. . . . Is there on earth a closer bond than this. That my beloved's mine and I am His".

*d. Called — Excluded.*

"Therefore the world knoweth us not".

We need to recognise this stark truth. "Ye are not of this world".

The Grace is given for us to be able to accept this truth, "Because it knew Him not".

Remember that the sons of God are to be marked out. The challenge is are we prepared for this exclusion.?

- i. We are not welcomed into its ranks.
- ii. We are often misunderstood and misjudged by the world.

"It is the way the Master went. Should not the servant tread it still"?

The words of our Saviour are important, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you".

**3. A GREAT HOPE.**

"It doeth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is".

Here indeed are sweet spices for the believer's enjoyment. Here is glorious anticipation. Here is the child of God's sure anchor. Here is the "living hope".

- i. We shall be taken out of this vale of tears.
- ii. Freed from the snares and temptations of the enemy of our souls.
- iii. Made like unto our blessed Lord.
- iv. Shall see Him face to face.

Psalm 17:5. "As for me I will behold Thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness".

"O blessed Hope, With this elate, Let not our hearts be desolate, But strong in love and patience wait. Till He come".

#### 4. A GREAT INCENTIVE.

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure".

The effectual application of such Love. The Hope is effective.

##### i. *He knows a constraint within.*

The reality of an inward urge to be holy. Not only because the Lord commands it of His followers, but because he now has sweet inclination within, this being the fruit of his love.

##### ii. *He desires a Christlike walk.*

"Even as he is pure". What an example, and the true child of God desires to follow this example.

What a goal to achieve by the grace of God.

##### iii. *He experiences a continual work.*

Lit. He goes on making himself pure".

This is a life's work never ceases till we reach the gates of glory. The Apostle Paul knew something of this continual work within, Phil. 3:12 "Not as though I had already attained either were already perfect, but I follow after . . . this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind I press on toward the mark. . . ."

2 Cor. 7:1 "Having therefore these promises dearly beloved let us cleanse . . . perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord".

May these four GREAT things captivate our hearts, and may we desire with all our being to enter into the reality of them within our own lives.

### EBENEZER

"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us!" 1 Samuel 7:12

The Lord, who wonderfully helped His people of old, is still the loving and faithful Helper of all who love, trust and obey Him.

- 1. In the past He has loved us and saved us — Jer. 31:3, 2. Tim. 1:9
- 2. In the present He makes "all things work together for good" Rom. 8:28
- 3. In the future His "goodness and mercy shall follow us" to glory Ps. 23:6



# A Solemn Truth

F. J. HARRIS

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*"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment . . ." Matthew 25:46*

*"Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." 1 Thess. 1:10*

The doctrine of eternal punishment, referred to in the above verses, and in many other parts of scripture, is a solemn and awesome truth. It should never be thought of or spoken about lightly, or discussed in a theoretical or academic manner. It is dreadful to contemplate and can only begin to be understood in the light of God's great love for a world of perishing sinners, revealed in the sending of His Son to save all who trust in Him from the awful penalty of sin. It is a truth which tells us something of God's holy hatred of sin and determination to punish it; it is a truth which shows something of the terrible, yet glorious, work which our Lord Jesus Christ freely undertook in order to save His people from their sins; it is a truth which demands that the gospel, the only remedy for sin, be preached in all the world, to every creature; it is a truth which should surely cause every true Christian to pray earnestly for the salvation of the lost.

It is hardly necessary to say that the doctrine of eternal punishment is a very unpopular, indeed a hated, doctrine. Colonel Robert Ingersoll, the infamous 19th Century opponent of all fundamental biblical truth, said in a lecture, "The idea of a hell was born of revenge and brutality on the one side, and cowardice on the other. I have no respect for any human being who believes it. I have no respect for any man who preaches it. I dislike this doctrine, I hate it, I despise it, I defy this doctrine which is infamous beyond all power to express."

What is our reaction to such a statement? As Bible believing Christians we must agree with the great American theologian, Dr. W. G. T. Shedd, who said, "Jesus Christ is the Person who is responsible for the doctrine of eternal perdition. He is the Being with whom all opponents of this doctrine are in conflict. Neither the Christian Church nor the Christian ministry are the authors of it. The Christian ministry would never have invented the dogma; neither would they have preached it in all the Christian centuries, like Jeremiah, with shrinking and tears, except at the command of that same Lord God who said, 'Whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak.' Beyond question it is more agreeable to our hearts to speak about the blessedness of the saved than about the suffering of the lost; but both must be proclaimed if we are to preach the whole truth as God has made it known to us."

Few worldly people today give any thought to what lies beyond the grave, other than some vague hope that if there is life after death it will be in a better world. Most unbelievers follow the humanistic philosophy that death is the end, that there is nothing more. I have often heard it expressed as 'When you're dead, you're done for' or 'I shall go six feet under and that's my lot' or 'I shall die just like a dog.'

Of those who do have some more definite belief in life after death, only a very few believe in a day of judgment or a hell which consists of eternal punishment. Yet this has not always been the case. There was a time when men's thoughts were influenced to some extent by the consistent teaching of the Christian Church concerning the biblical testimony

to eternal punishment and there was some awareness of that truth and some kind of fear of God.

But as the church began to deviate from the truth, this message was denied, diluted or simply not preached and so it gradually dropped out of most people's thinking. Today we have arrived at an almost unbelievable situation. Not only is the doctrine of eternal punishment denied by liberal theologians (from whom we expect no less for they deny almost every biblical truth) but tragically an increasing number of those who would describe themselves as evangelical, bible believing Christians are denying it. Numbers of them are, or have been, respected Christian leaders. Perhaps the best known is John Stott who denies the doctrine of eternal punishment in his recent book 'Essentials'.

What are we to think when so many are now denying the long held belief of the church that those who die without Christ are eternally lost? The Lord Jesus Christ clearly taught that the great purpose of His coming into the world was 'To seek and to save that which was lost.' Luke 19:10. The Greek word translated 'lost' is the same word which is translated 'destroy' in Matt. 10:28 (Fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell) and 'perish' in John 3:16. Its root meaning is not annihilation or the abolition of existence but 'waste' or 'ruin'. For example in John 3:16 'perish' is set in opposition to 'eternal life'. Eternal life is not simply endless existence but life forever enjoyed under the blessing and favour of God. Not to have eternal life is to perish, which is not the opposite of endless existence but the opposite of God's favour, that is, His wrath. So Paul wrote of Jesus 'who delivered us from the wrath to come.'

No one taught this solemn truth more clearly than the blessed Son of God Himself, the One who hung upon Calvary's cross to rescue sinners from the pit of hell. On a number of occasions He spoke of 'gehenna' (translated 'hell') which was the valley outside Jerusalem where rubbish was continually burning. He spoke of 'the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched'. He spoke of 'outer darkness' and of 'weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth'. He spoke of 'everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.' He spoke of 'everlasting punishment.'

Clearly, then, to deny this doctrine is flatly to contradict the Son of God Himself. To deny this doctrine also affects many vital biblical truths:

- a) The character of God is undermined. He has revealed Himself in His word as a God of holiness, justice and truth. 'God is not a man that He should lie' and He has declared that He will 'by no means clear the guilty.' He must keep His word. If unbelieving men and women simply pass out of existence at the end of their earthly lives, then where is the justice God?
- b) The saving love of God cannot be properly understood if it is not seen against the background of the dreadful state from which Christ came to save sinners. If the biblical teaching about hell is denied we can have no adequate appreciation of the glory of the gospel. It is only in the light of the 'wrath to come' that we understand the significance of the question, 'what must I do to be saved?' — and realise the greatness of our indebtedness to our dear Redeemer in having come to seek and to save the lost.
- c) It denies the authority of the word of God for, however much men may try to explain away the doctrine of eternal punishment, it is impossible to evade the clear teaching of numerous scriptures concerning the final judgment following which there shall be a division between the saved and lost, the former being received into the blessedness

of God's eternal kingdom and the latter going away into everlasting punishment. Between the two states, as Christ himself taught, there is a great gulf fixed.

- d) It robs Christ's command to preach the gospel to every creature of one of its most significant motives. Towards the end of his life Hudson Taylor stated 'I would never have thought of going out to China had I not believed that the Chinese were lost and needed Christ.' Similar convictions were shared by William Carey, Adoniram Judson, David Livingstone, Henry Martyn, David Brainerd, John Paton and many others. They were utterly convinced of the awful danger of the heathen and felt a compulsion laid upon them to put forth their best efforts to take the gospel to lost and dying men.
- e) It utterly fails to understand the cross. Did our Lord come into the world to save sinners? From what did He save them? Did He offer Himself upon the cross as an atoning sacrifice? For what purpose? It was not only to fit men for heaven but to save them from hell that our blessed Saviour suffered the painful and shameful death of the cross.
- f) It undermines the law of God and encourages wanton living. If there is no judgment day, no thought of retribution then, as in Isaiah's day, the ungodly will indulge in all kinds of excesses, saying, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'
- g) To deny the doctrine of eternal punishment is to vindicate false teachers. God warned the people of Jeremiah's day saying, 'Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and to every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.' Jeremiah 23:16f. Today, with one voice, the cults deny the doctrine of eternal punishment. Let it never be said that they were right.

It is no kindness to unbelievers to hide this doctrine and never mention it. It is a false love which fails to warn. Solemn though the truth is it must be declared out of faithfulness to the God of truth Who has clearly revealed it in His infallible word.

If we believe it, and hold this truth aright, it will, it must, have some impact upon our praying and concern for those without Christ. May God help us all to respond aright to His word.

"My soul through many changes goes;  
His love no variation knows."

"The gospel bears my spirit up;  
A faithful and unchanging God  
Lays the foundation of my hope,  
In oaths, and promises, and blood."

# For Younger Readers

CARINE MACKENZIE

## **PASS THE SALT**

Salt is one commodity that is probably found in every kitchen cupboard. We use it to improve the taste and flavour of our food. If we forget to put salt in the soup or on the potatoes, then the taste is not so good.

In days gone by, salt was much more important in the kitchen. Before the days of freezers, fridges and canned food, salt was used as a preservative. In hot countries meat was well salted and that stopped it from going bad. My grandmother used to put herrings into a barrel with lots of salt. The salt preserved the fish and they could be used weeks and even months later.

Jesus tells Christians that they are to be like salt in the world. What did He mean? How can we be like salt? The Christian should be having a good effect on the community — whether that is school, or college or work or where we live. Perhaps the influence or teaching of a Christian will stop someone from taking the Lord's name in vain, or keep them from sinning in some way, so preventing society from becoming worse. The conversation or example of a Christian can encourage someone else to think of the Lord Jesus to live in a more God-honouring Biblical way. This is enhancing the community — making it more pleasant and useful — just as salt enhances the flavour of food.

In olden times salt was used as a cleansing agent. In Ezekiel we read about the new born babies being usually rubbed with salt to clean them and to prevent infection. Our daughter had to go to hospital to get four wisdom teeth extracted. Before she came home she was given strict instructions to wash her mouth out after every meal with a solution of salt and water until the gums had healed up. This was to stop infection setting in. How can a Christian be like salt in this way? If we live our lives according to God's law and show love and compassion to our friends and neighbours, this may help to have a cleansing influence on the community. Only God can cleanse our hearts and change lives but perhaps our lives can help to lead people to come to Christ for cleansing.

If you ever have a small cut on your finger, and unexpectedly touch salt, how sore it feels. It almost brings tears to your eyes. Perhaps if we are to be really like salt, we have to tell people a message from God that may be hard or hurtful. Being told that you are lost can hurt. Being warned about hell is very hard. If that hurting drives the person to Jesus the Great Physician for healing then it does a lot of good.

Salt is not doing any good if it is still in the packet or in the salt cellar. It has to be applied to do good. The Christian too has to be in contact with people if he or she is going to obey Jesus and be like salt in the world.

### **Find the Answers**

1. Who was turned into a pillar of salt because she looked back to the sinful city of Sodom?  
Genesis 19.26.

- 2 Which city was known as the city of Salt? Joshua 15.62.
3. Which offering in the Old Testament had to be seasoned with salt? Leviticus 2.13.
4. What did Elisha heal by putting salt in it? 2 Kings 2.21.
5. What did Job think was better eaten with salt? Job 6.6.
6. What is salt good for if it loses its savour or salty taste? Matthew 5.13.
7. What does Paul tell us should always be with grace, seasoned with salt? Colossians 4.6.
8. What cannot yield both salt and fresh water? James 3.12.

## In the Splendour of the Mount

DAVID A. DOUDNEY (1811-1893)

*"And behold there talked with Him two men which were Moses and Elias." Luke 9:30.*

Now how were these known to be Moses and Elias? There was not only a revelation, but a recognition. The revelation was by the Lord, the recognition was of the Lord by man; for that man did recognise is clear from the saying of Peter: "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

The very fact of the disciples knowing Moses and Elias gives us, we conceive, ground for believing that the redeemed will recognize each other in a future state. For ourselves, we feel persuaded that neither persons nor events connected with the present world will be forgotten in eternity, but that the clearer light thrown upon our present relations and pathway will only the more richly and blessedly redound to the praise of the glory of Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Then shall "we know even as we are known" and behold, in all its comprehensive fulness and blessedness that which we now see but in part. All that now appears so strange, contradictory, adverse and inexplicable in our present pathway will then be cleared up. The less you are now able to see the Lord's hand the more will you then behold it. If, in this most imperfect state and bowed down as we are by a body of sin and death, you have at times the fullest conviction that the Lord is leading you by 'the right way' what will it be when all your wanderings are over and you have no sin to bear down your disenthralled and liberated soul — no devil to tempt you nor world to allure you.

### THEIR GREAT THEME

Now there is something very striking in reference to the appearance of Moses and Elias who are told "appeared in glory and spake of the Lord's decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." The word "decease" is elsewhere rendered exodus — a going out or passing away. The idea is simple and cheering and, rely upon it, if you are interested in Him who by His own death conquered the king of terrors, your so-called death will be nothing more than an exodus — a departure — a going out — of a body of sin into a glorified body, not a change of body, but a change of condition, a passing away from the time-state, with all its encumbrances, into a world of light and glory where no cloud shall overspread or intercept thy Sun, but where, as the Sun of Righteousness, He shall shine upon your enraptured soul through a blissful eternity.

What a glorious view of the Deity of Christ does the expression give, they "spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." Of whom but the Lord Christ could it be said? All power was with Him. He, and He alone, could by His own absolute and omnipotent arm meet death, and rend from him both his strength and his dominion. Who but the Lord Christ in His own divine Person and by His own unaided strength could say, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes."

But there is one view of this subject which is fraught with the richest comfort and consolation. It is the very fact that Moses and Elias *did* appear, under such circumstances, to the Lord Christ.

First, in regard to Moses' appearance. In Deut. 34: 5/6 we read, "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried Him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." Here we are told that Moses as well as Elias appeared in glory — that is, as we conceive, gloriously, or in their glorified bodies; for would it not appear that the Lord had vouchsafed to raise Moses from the dead? And they now appear to Christ, the One as the law-giver, the other as one of the chief of the prophets; both not only communing with, but, as it were, surrendering to Jesus!

**But mark the nature of their communings.** We are told that "they spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." They appeared as earnest and first-fruits of the one vast body of the redeemed. Their very appearance, as redeemed and glorified sinners, was a virtual recognition and acknowledgement of the great covenant engagement into which Christ, in common with the Father and the Holy Ghost, had entered. Upon the understanding of that covenant they and all Old Testament saints had been admitted into glory.

Was there not, however, something more than this involved in the appearance of Moses and Elias and in that "they spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem?" We are told, with respect to the agony in the garden, when Jesus had said, "Father if Thou be willing, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless not My will but Thine be done," that "there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." Such was the stupendousness of the work which the Lord Christ had undertaken and such the nature of "that baptism He had to be baptized with it, and with which He was so straitened until it was accomplished," that "He sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." "In his humiliation His judgment was taken away." He was the subject of creature-weakness and creature fears, though that weakness and those fears partook

not of the nature of sin. His humanity was pressed down under the weight and responsibility of the sin charged upon Him. He had, as Hart has it,

“Strength enough, and none to spare.”

Under these circumstances, Moses and Elias appeared and what, we ask, was involved in that appearance? Now only as the law giver and the prophet did they present themselves — Christ being the great end or object of the law on the one hand, and the testified of by the prophet, on the other; but they stood, shall we say, as a deputation from the redeemed in the court of heaven, virtually saying, “We are here — where we are and what we are — as the blessed fruit and consequence of Thy undertaking. Our continuance as the saved and the glorified rests upon the fulfilment of Thy mission. If Thou failest in that fulfilment, if Thou drawest back, or resignest the work Thou hast undertaken, then are we, the whole body of the redeemed, for ever and ever undone. Fail Thou in Thy work, and thenceforth and for ever are we excluded from that glory into which by virtue of Thy covenant engagements we have been admitted.” Such must have inevitably been the result had Christ failed in His work, or had He not drunk to the very dregs the contents of that cup of which He spake when He said, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.”

Again, if Jesus was “heard in that He feared”, and if He, in the extremity of His sufferings and in prospect of His last agonies, condescended to receive the ministration of an angel, will He — can He — be unmindful of His poor, weak and timid brethren as they approach the dark valley of the shadow of death? If Moses and Elias came to commune with *Him* about *His* death, will He not come and commune with His people about theirs? Will He not prove in this, as in every other respect, that “we have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

### RICH CONSOLATION

Oh how consolatory is the thought that Jesus does, in very deed, personally and practically sympathise with His dear people, not merely from His knowledge of them in His abstract Deity, but from the fact that He has in His own Person undergone all that they are called to endure. He underwent, in its intensity, all that they pass through in a simple and most moderated measure. How sweet, too, to come to Jesus with the feeling that He knows personally and experimentally all we are exposed to, and all of which we are the subjects; for if He had not sin in Him, He had it upon Him. How sweetly was it recorded of Him, ages before His incarnation, “In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them, and He bare them carried them all the days of old.” Isaiah 63:9. Yea, how vast the privilege for His beloved ones to come to Him, as they “fear to enter into the cloud” with the plea as once applicable to Himself. And how irresistible that appeal, for He will not — cannot — deny Himself.

Oh ye tried and tempted ones, be your condition what it may, whatever your fears, however great your darkness or despondency, be it yours to GO TO JESUS — to tell Him all — to breathe out your sorrows into His sympathising ear. He will hear — He will give heed — He will deliver. He hath pledged Himself to do so for He hath said, “Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest,” and again, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.”

# James Ormiston

Editor of the Gospel Magazine 1895-1916

“A man of strong will and fixed principle and singularly gifted” was one of the tributes paid to Mr. Ormiston on his decease. A survey of his life endorses this tribute.

James Ormiston felt the call of God to the ministry in his boyhood and eventually commenced his studies at King’s College, London. In his student days he often preached with power in Hyde Park, sometimes speaking at considerable length and retaining the attention of his large audience.

He was ordained in 1863 in Kendal Parish Church by Samuel Waldegrave, Bishop of Carlisle, a truly godly and spiritually minded man. James Ormiston at his ordination became curate of Wythop near Bassenthwaite, Cumberland. The church building was in a neglected state so he set himself to remedy the matter. It is interesting to note that John Ruskin took a keen interest in the rebuilding of Wythop Church. Ormiston’s first sermon was based on 1. Cor. 2:1-2 “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified”. At the close of his ministry there this again was his text. This became the pattern in each sphere of service in which he ministered. The cross was central in all his ministry whether spoken or written, public or personal. God richly owned such preaching to the conversion of sinners and to the building up of the saints.

During the construction of the Keswick Railway he was assigned to conduct a service in Cockermouth schoolroom — a service for the men employed on the work. This involved walking a total of eleven miles in order to take the service which was attended by a large number of workmen and townspeople. His first presentation in the ministry was a lantern provided by the navvies to give him light as he travelled on their behalf.

## HOLLOWAY

From a country sphere he moved to London to St. Luke’s, West Holloway which included a large part of the area known as the Metropolitan Cattle Market. As a result of his labours there St. David’s Church was built and a new parish formed. In all some £14,000 was raised for the building of the church and schools. James Ormiston had a tablet erected in the church porch on which were inscribed the words:

“Asked of the Lord from 1866-1873. Given in Covenant faithfulness 1873”

The foundation stone was laid by the Earl of Shaftesbury at whose side stood the Rev William Pennefather vicar of St. Jude’s, Mildmay Park. When the church was opened for divine worship the vicar recorded that “a quiet and simple service ensued and all passed off to the satisfaction of those who had no taste for latter day ecclesiastical sensations”.

In his final message to the congregation he said “it was my purpose from my first coming here to be a ‘plain man’ (Gen. 25:27) to testify great truths, glorious truths, soul saving truths in language so simple and plain that no one might put a wrong interpretation upon my testimony . . . it has been my constant prayer that I might fully declare the counsel of God, that I might hold nothing back through fear of man and that I might exalt the Lord Jesus Christ”. He found tremendous strength in the promise “Commit thy way unto



the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass". This sustained him in all the responsibility that devolved upon him.

### OLD HILL

In 1876 James Ormiston moved to Old Hill near Dudley to a new church of which he was again the first Incumbent. The new parish was formed out of the parish of Rowley Regis. It was through the personal munificence of the two sons of the Rev George Barrs (vicar of Rowley Regis) and Mr. Walter Bassano J.P. and their relatives and friends that the cost of building the church, some £11,000 was defrayed. The church was dedicated in April 1876. The numbers attending were so great that Ormiston wrote "the place has become too strait for us". As a consequence four hundred additional seats were provided by an extension to the building.

The vicar started cottage meetings in the poorest part of the parish aimed to reach those because of "lack of decent clothes inclined them not to mix at church with their more favoured neighbours". Ormiston sought by all means available to him to bring the message of the Gospel to the people of the district.

### BRISTOL

Ormiston became physically exhausted and on the advice of his doctor he was constrained to take a much less trying sphere of work. In 1880 he was appointed to the parish of St. Mary-le-Port, Bristol succeeding the Rev Samuel Abraham Walker, the convenor of the Clifton Conference. Here as in other spheres he preached a Covenant salvation to a covenant people. Shortly after taking up the work in Bristol he wrote to the congregation "it was laid on our heart to afford the congregation an opportunity during the week for the special study of God's Holy Word. A public conversational Bible Class will be commenced in humble dependence on our gracious God".

James Ormiston was a decided Protestant and gave much time to lecturing on Protestant issues and was much sought after in this connection. At a meeting of the Church Association he declared "Ritualism was a religion which dealt not with fallen man in his fallen condition but simply educated him into the belief that he was a religious man".

The rector was nothing if not a great student. In the study he had a text in a prominent position. "Thus saith the Lord, cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully (negligently)" Jer. 48:10. He also had a verse written in Dr. Doudney's handwriting:

"Wait and watch and thou shalt see,  
Wondrous things and done for thee".

Mr. Ormiston certainly had the pen of a ready writer — his pen can scarcely have been out of his hand. In addition to being editor of the *Gospel Magazine* he was also for a lengthy period editor of the *English Churchman*, only resigning in 1910 when he was 72 years of age. In his final message he urged the readers of the *English Churchman* "to stand fast by the doctrines of grace, endeavour to experience them in their lives and make them known to others".

James Ormiston wrote "The Satan of Scripture" which was at first published anonymously. The book ran into many thousands of copies and was described as a master piece and represented an immense amount of study, research and prayer. Among other booklets and pamphlets he wrote was "Wine and Oil from Immanuel's Land", written after a visit to Palestine.

**EDITOR OF THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE**

Mr. Ormiston succeeded Mr. George Cowell as editor of the magazine in 1895. Mr. Cowell although he had written for the Gospel Magazine for over 40 years was only editor for a very short period before his home call.

The new editor conducted the Gospel Magazine with considerable ability. He had a facile pen and was an able and careful writer and felt the importance of verifying his quotations. The great doctrines of grace were precious to his heart. He greatly admired Augustus Toplady who had edited the Gospel Magazine in 1775-76 and felt it an honour to walk in his steps in the unfolding of these distinctive truths to which Toplady bore a remarkable testimony. Whilst holding firmly to the doctrines of grace he preached them lovingly and gracefully. He was faithful, unswerving, uncompromising yet courteous.

When he became the proprietor of the Gospel Magazine he felt the importance of taking every precaution that the magazine should be conducted on the same definite and distinct lines as those which had characterised it during the whole period of its existence. He therefore was instrumental in drawing up a Trust Deed to safeguard as far as humanly possible the future of the Magazine. The Trust Deed provided that the Gospel Magazine should be a means of expounding, propagating, defending and disseminating those revealed Scriptural truths which are theologically and popularly known as the doctrines of Grace as opposed to the doctrines and principles of the Church of Rome, sacerdotalism, rationalism, Arianism, Unitarianism, Socinianism, Pelagianism and Ariminianism".

**CLOSING DAYS**

Mr. Ormiston preached what was to be his final sermon on Whit Sunday 1914 taking as his text "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is not of His" (Romans 8:9). Then for two years and four months he was laid aside and unable to preach. Loving messages were read out from him in church and in the Bible Class. He died 30th September 1916 aged 78 years after a prolonged illness devotedly ministered to by his daughters. He was able to edit the Gospel Magazine to the end, the October issue being published shortly after his death.

He lived a full life and was an example and inspiration to many. He was spared to complete fifty years in the ministry and twenty years as editor of the Gospel Magazine. In some of the last issues of the magazine that he edited he traced something of God's gracious dealings with him through those years. It is significant that in his Will he wrote: "For my salvation I depend through sovereign grace on the sole merits of the Lord Jesus Christ".

Truly "the memory of the just is blessed".

**M.H.**

"How are you today, sir?" The speaker, a fine, stalwart young man, bent reverently over the bed beside him as he spoke. The elderly invalid smiled faintly, "My head is resting very sweetly on three pillows," he replied, while a gleam of light illumined the sunken eyes — "Infinite power, infinite love, and infinite wisdom."

# God's Unchangeable Word

JAMES ORMISTON

(Editor of the Gospel Magazine 1895-1916)

*"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" Matt. 24:35*

There is something very solemn in this divine declaration, so far as the "passing away" of the natural creation is concerned. "The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" is another scripture profoundly solemn. Yet again, "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, whereas the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat". These and many similar divine predictions of the removing of the heavens and the earth at the Lord's second coming, place in sharpest contrast the stability and fixity and changelessness of the Word on which the hope of God's children is, through grace, caused to rest. A similar contrast is used to emphasise the immutability of the God of the Word Himself, "and, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they shall perish, but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as a garment, and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same and Thy years shall not fail". God and His Word are equally unchangeable. His truth, like Himself is eternal. It never grows old. It never became weak. It is always trustworthy and must be fulfilled. It is "settled for ever in heaven". Its promises are all made "in Christ Jesus" and therefore are "yea and amen". As has been well said:

"His very word of grace is strong  
As that which built the skies,  
The voice that rolls the stars along  
Speaks all the promises".

Faith even in the smallest measure, when she lays her hand on one of those sure promises touches the mainspring which sets omnipotence in motion." Put Me in remembrance" is the command of the faithful Author of all the Covenant promises and in obedience to that gracious word, faith pleads and prevails. These promises are declared by God Himself to be "exceeding great and precious". His eyes are always upon them. As gracious John Newton writes:

"But sooner all nature shall change  
Than one of God's promises fail"

The natural properties of things must yield and bend to their great Law-giver's will if they stand in the way of His promises to His believing people. It was so in the case of Abraham, "who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, so shall the seed be". The trusting patriarch "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith giving glory to God, and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised he was well able to perform". How blessedly encouraging to our own poor weak hearts is this example.

What an incitement to prayer it affords us. "Ask and it shall be given you".

"Prayer clasps the hand that guides the world;  
Oh! make it then, thy stay,  
Ask largely, and thy God will be  
A kindly Giver unto thee".

We may consider the promises of Jehovah as the rungs in the ladder Jacob saw, which reached from heaven to earth, for by these faith ascends to God, and by their fulfilment God comes down to his suppliant people. The promises constitute the substance of the holy commerce carried on betwixt believers and their Father in heaven. His gracious Word is to them the only durable riches honourably obtained and untarnished by the rust of earth. "Oh how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day" is the heart language of the spiritual man who feeds upon it as royal dainties. It sweetly ministers to his soul under all conditions. It is never out of season. Its medicinal leaves are the heal-all of his wounds and bruises. Its never failing fruits delight and refresh his spirit. Its counsels direct his goings among the difficulties and intricacies of his pilgrim pathway. Its rebukes are faithful and salutary. Its commands and precepts are all wise, good and profitable. The motives to obedience, holiness and service which it supplies constrain the hearts of God's dear children and confirm them in habits well pleasing in His sight. The unchangeable Word is their rod and staff in life and their stronghold in the hour of death. "Blessed" indeed are the people who "know the joyful sound" of that Word. Happy is he who can truly affirm "I trust in Thy Word"; "Thy law do I love"; "I rejoice at Thy Word as one that findeth great spoil"; "Thy law is my delight"; "I am small and despised; yet do not I forget Thy precepts"; "My soul fainteth for Thy salvation; but I hope in Thy Word".

## The Dew

JAMES ORMISTON

(Editor of the Gospel Magazine 1895-1916)

*"I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon" Hosea 14:5*

This divine promise made to an Eastern people accustomed to excessive heat had a peculiary refreshing meaning. All the gracious gifts of God are designed to meet the necessities of His dependent people and to do so suitably and bountifully. His knowledge of the work of His own hands is perfect and particular, and His acquaintance with the individual — the least wants of each creature are exact and tender. "The drops of the night" obey His holy will in their distillation and distribution and revive exhausted vegetation through the silent hours of gloom. "All thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee" (Ps. 145:10) God often carries on His most potent works of love and beneficence in the silence and darkness of the night.

Times of divine goodness and grace are granted without manifestations of outside show. Dew falls without noise. It is after the sun has withdrawn his hot beams that in the cooler atmosphere of the darkness vegetation becomes laden with moisture. But God is supreme in His ordering of the multitudinous dew-drops. The fleece of wool which Gideon laid on the threshing floor, prayerfully awaiting a divine sign concerning his campaign against the Midianite and the Amalekite invaders of his country, was first filled with dew only, while the next night, at his request, God caused it to be "dry upon the fleece only", while "upon all the ground" there was dew (Judges 6:36-40). How many a humble prayer has also timidly been presented by a true believer in the Lord Jesus, when he has hoped on God's tender mercy, and while the power of omnipotence has condescended to respond though in silent providence? Gently falls upon each parched leaf and drooping flower the heaven-sent drop of the night, and at sunrise nature rejoices in fresh gladness and beauty. Thus, the soul that spiritually thirsts after the living God renews her strength in the night of silent, patient waiting for the communications of His grace and truth, and puts on day by day fresh loveliness and strength.

We sometimes mistake our mercies, when we complain "my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night" (Song of Sol. 5:2); and we forget that our faithful Keeper "giveth songs in the night" (Job 35:10). Those night songs linger in our memories and are apt to last us many days. Oh brethren, let us seek to value the mercies brought to us in the silence and calm of the night season!

"Oft as the heart's meek twilight falls,  
And life's coarse discords melt away,  
The peace of God, like dew, recall  
The cool of Eden's day".

Such seasons are very much to be treasured when they are graciously granted. They, at most, show the spirit to be willing, but the flesh, alas to be weak. "He giveth songs in the night" is a sweet truth to the weary and footsore travellers on Zion's pilgrimage.

It is instructive to notice that the substance of the promise under notice concerns the Lord Himself — "I will be as the dew"; so that His people are secured as to their portion and its fruitful effects. The connection between the dew and the manna in the experience of ancient Israel was close and blessed. It will be remembered that it is written, "and when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground" (Exodus 16:14). The Lord Jesus teaches us "verily, verily, I say unto you. He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life" (John 6:47, 48). Thus we are shown how the Spirit and the Word co-operate in feeding the souls of God's dear people. The blessed union secured their daily allowance — "a continual allowance given them, a daily rate for every day, all the days of their life" (2 Kings 25:30). What a marvel is it that it is added "He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon"? Fruitfulness follows most certainly upon the Lord's own husbandry. What marvel is it that God's good land should 'yield her increase' when the Lord Himself plants and waters and watches over it? The souls of Jehovah's chosen people are predicted in the Word "as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men" (Micah 5:7). God glorifies Himself in the prosperity of His church, and her fruitfulness is of Him only. His glory is in the midst of her, and from His fulness she receives all her fruitfulness, comeliness and bliss. "The King's favour is as dew upon the grass" (Prov 19:12); such

all the saints who read these lines unite in proclaiming it, for they have feasted upon its preciousness ever since they first tasted its distinctiveness, its blessedness and proved its power. May we increasingly own ourselves debtors to the free sovereign grace of God.

## The Heart of Deceit

JOHN H. ALGAR

Mr. Algar is Vicar of St. Martin's and St. Paul's Church, Tipton, Staffs.

*"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jeremiah 17:9/10*

I would like to consider briefly this whole subject of guilt in a general way. Then in a little more detail to consider that statement: "The heart is deceitful above all things" and then to try and glimpse some of the implications of this truth for the Christian Gospel.

Pagan psychology today speaks as though guilt were some kind of perversion which has crept in and we should use whatever means we can to get rid of it out of our system because it shouldn't be there. But what I am afraid of is that this kind of attitude, because it is so pervasive, will also infect professing christians. They will think that on no account must they feel guilty, and that if we do feel guilty, we have got to cover it up and make excuses, get our friends to tell us it's all right. We then lose sight altogether of the importance of guilt in the christian scheme of things. It is very well put in the hymn of Charles Wesley:-

"Give us ourselves and Thee to know,  
In this our gracious day:  
Repentance unto life bestow,  
And take our sins away.

Convict us first of unbelief,  
And freely then release:  
Fill every soul with sacred grief,  
And then with sacred peace."

**Sacred grief** is a grief which is a great blessing: "Blessed are they that mourn". And the hymn continues:-

That blessed sense of guilt impart,  
And then remove the load;  
Trouble and wash the troubled heart  
In the atoning blood."

If you and I are to know that sacred peace and have our hearts washed in the atoning blood and know the blessing of a cleansed conscience, there must first of all be that 'troubling', that sense of guilt, that knowing ourselves.

So in a real sense we want to encourage guilt — there's not enough of it about, either inside or outside the church. If we find ourselves saying this to our friends, "Oh don't worry, there are lots of people worse than you", then I suspect that there is something wrong. If we could see ourselves as we really are in the sight of heaven, even if we are christians, then I think that we would never lift up our heads again, we would be overwhelmed. Another of Wesley's hymns says:-

"Show me as my soul can bear  
The depth of inbred sin"

I think we should pray, "Lord, show me my sin but only as I can bear it." If God were to show us our heart as it really is in the sight of heaven, we should be paralysed and feel that God would never look upon us again — so He just shows us what we can bear and that's a blessing. The first great work of the Holy Spirit is to convict and convince the world of sin, to make people feel guilty, that's how God works — that's how He leads them to His Son. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23/24. This is the prayer of the believer. An old writer says:- "No man can be a child of God who has not seen his heart to be so sinful as to need regenerating grace, who has not seen his sins to be so great as to deserve everlasting condemnation and to see his helplessness so complete as to need an Almighty Saviour." Now, not everyone who feels that is a christian, because you can feel all that without being a christian. But I fear not all professing christians do feel that — do you feel it? That your heart could be so sinful as to need regeneration? Are we thoroughly convinced that our sins deserve everlasting condemnation and that we are, as our forefathers used to say — "hell-deserving sinners?" Do you feel that only an Almighty Saviour can help you? Remember that our guilt and our pollution does not just come from those obvious voluntary sins which we have committed or fallen into, but we are guilty through 'original sin'. As our Prayer Book puts it: "Forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin."

Remember this, justification, that great and glorious truth of the Gospel, makes our standing and state before God as justified sure and certain, but, as far as our character is concerned, we are still sinners, but we are forgiven sinners. God has graciously absolved us — the price has been paid — it will not be laid to our account — we shall not come under condemnation, but we are still guilty sinners. That is true every moment of every day that we live in this world. We are forgiven, please God, but we are forgiven guilty sinners. Then let us ponder what an understanding of that should do in our walk with God and our relationship with Him and the kind of attitude we should have as we come to Him.

I hope we shall not be found amongst those who so easily say that this is all too morbid and depressing — we want something cheery — we want to be uplifted — we want to be comforted. That is not the way to blessing — that is not the way the Scripture speaks — that is not the way of the Gospel; it is the way of the world.

So I think when we approach verses like this in the Bible, we should approach them in this positive way, eager to learn what God has to say to us about ourselves, that we might embrace more fully, deeply and heartily, the salvation He has provided in the Gospel.

**Secondly we want to look at this phrase — "The heart is deceitful above all things."** Now we could point to many things, for instance, we could look at it in this sense that

the whole structure of life in this world is a web of deceit, fraud and deceit. Do you believe that? Have you glimpsed that sometimes? We live in a whole web of deceitfulness. We think of business, trade, commerce, social life. Yes, I know that outwardly these things are often conducted very smoothly and very courteously, but now and again you get a little glimpse under the surface and you see just how much fraud and deceit is going on. Oh, yes, a lot of people would say, "That's not wrong, everyone does it. We didn't mean anything by it." But I mean all these false reasons that are given why a job should be done urgently, all this saying that someone is out when you're in all the time, all this saying in correspondence "Yours sincerely" when what has been written has not been sincere at all — all this flattery that goes on in order to get business. The human race since the fall are natural hypocrites, but God did not make us like that. Once we glimpse that the whole structure of life is like that, there is very very little plain honest dealing going on in the world. Very few people are in reality what they appear to be outwardly. "The heart" — (which everyone of us has) — "is deceitful above all things." We are natural hypocrites.

It would be very nice to be able to say that when you come to christians, when you come within the church congregation, everything is different, all that changes, we see everything clearly, we are all absolutely straightforward, there is no deceit, no giving of wrong impressions — we all show exactly what we are. But we do not, do we? And the tragedy is that this deceitfulness remains. Why, Paul has to write to christian congregations — you can read it in Colossians and Ephesians, that they should not tell lies to one another. Now, whether they were actually telling lies, I don't know, perhaps they were, but I can understand it because we do tell lies to one another, not by saying something that is obviously wrong, or we have done something when we haven't, although — God forgive — it does happen. But we tell lies by our whole attitude — the reasons we give to people — the excuses we make — the impressions we give. If we were really honest, we are not giving the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth all the time. I think that perhaps, more often than we realise, we are lying to one another. Think about it! This goes on amongst christians! "The heart is deceitful above all things."

**We deceive others, but perhaps, even more, we deceive ourselves,** and it is a great blessing if we are aware of that danger of deceiving ourselves, even as christians. Look at the Apostle Peter, "Lord, I will never deny Thee, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee to prison and death, Lord, you know my heart." Well, the Lord did know his heart, but Peter didn't! Peter was absolutely sincere in saying that I'm sure, but he was absolutely deceived, he didn't know what was in himself. And we say things and we pray things and we sing things and so on and I think that the Lord will be saying to us, "Look, you just don't know what you are saying, you don't live like that, you don't believe that, you don't know what the implications are of your words. You are sincere, but your heart is deceiving you." Even Paul the Apostle had to say at a certain time, "Now there is nothing on my conscience, I don't know anything against myself, but that does not mean I am justified, it is the Lord who searches the heart." As far as man is concerned, Paul could say he had a clear conscience, but he says that doesn't mean everything is all right. Our hearts deceive us; there are many things wrong with our consciences, it needs correcting, it needs educating as the years go by, as we read the Word of God, and Paul says, "It is for God to say. He who judges me is the Lord." And I suspect that our hearts are deceiving us very often. When we find ourselves saying, for instance, "Well, I've done that but it's only a little sin, it's only a little lie, it's only a little mistake." Your conscience



will tell you that it's only a little sin, it doesn't matter very much. Your heart is deceiving you. You might even say, "God will not require it. God will overlook that. That will be swallowed up in the other good things that I have done." Or perhaps, "I can't really believe all this teaching about Hell. I can't believe that a loving God would do that. I'm sure it's going to be all right for everyone in the end." Or perhaps — and this is a very common feeling — that my sin will not matter so much because I am a believer. I have done wrong but it does not make me as guilty as it would an unbeliever. And your heart is deceiving you because it is *the other way round*. If you are a believer, what you do wrong is infinitely worse than it is for an unbeliever, because you are doing it against what God has done in your heart, the light He has given you and His sanctifying power at work within you. Paul, talking about this matter of our sinfulness in Romans 6:1/2 says, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" How can we who died to sin by our faith in Christ, we who were crucified with Christ, how can we who have died to sin still live in it? Make no mistake, if you are a christian, every sin you commit is far far worse in us than it would be in an unbeliever. Don't let your heart deceive you then! It will deceive you again in other ways. You see how we have got to be thoughtful and introspective and ready to go deep in our self-examination.

Your heart will tell you sometimes that you have overcome something, that a certain thing that often tempted you in the past has gone. That is part of its cunning and deceitfulness. It will make you think you have won the victory, but what has really happened is that deep down in the recesses of your heart that same thing is lurking, ready to come out, and one day it will give you a bitter surprise if you are not careful. You thought it had gone but it hadn't!

**Your heart will deceive you in other ways by being erratic.** You will find that nine times out of ten perhaps you could be very patient and then suddenly, unexpectedly, you are sinfully impatient with someone and it has taken you by surprise. It is what happened to Moses, the great man of faith who was meek and humble but in the end he was prevented from going into the promised land by a dreadful loss of temper and anger which brought dishonour upon God. Moses — the very man you would have expected to overcome that thing, was caught out by it. "The heart is deceitful above all things."

You will find perhaps that your heart is ready sometimes to be agreeable, ready to go with people, and then suddenly, unexpectedly, you will find it becomes stubborn. You don't know why — it is gentle and then suddenly it becomes harsh — it has deceived you. Or you find that you have got a will to do something but your affections, your emotions are not in keeping with your will, or you find that you acted emotionally but your intellect and judgment have not gone along with it, and there are all those sorts of cross-purposes working in your heart and it is not functioning properly.

You remember what the heart is in the Bible — it is the centre of our personality. It includes our will and our emotions and our understanding all together and often it is a terrible confusion and has been ever since our first parents rebelled against God.

Now there is One, as our text says, who is not deceived by these things but who sees clearly what is going on. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jeremiah 17/10. That is a very sobering thing for us to bear in mind, isn't it? It is not just that God knows what is in our heart, He is actively looking into it; it says, "I the Lord *search* the heart" and the mind. He is taking notice of them. He is reckoning it up, and as Jesus says: "Every

idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matt. 12/36. They thought nothing of it, just a casual word, they didn't mean it, didn't bother whether it was accurate or not. No wonder it says that a day is coming when the books will be opened. Everything is there — everything is recorded — things we shall have long forgotten — some good things but also many evil things. So, let us be warned!

**Finally**, we just want to glimpse if we can the bearings of these things upon the christian Gospel.

Let me first just say something negative. These are words which could well be written over every human institution — over Law Courts, over Churches, over Centres of Culture and Social Activity, and so on, and I do not mean just to humble us, I mean something deeper than that. I mean as something to bear in mind, because this truth is something that will affect and more or less pervert and enervate everything that man does. And men are all too often forgetful of this — if they are not ignorant of it — as they make their plans for social improvement, for communities and for education or as they come to worship God. If they forget this truth they are going to be disappointed. You have got to allow for it, in education or whatever it is — "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." And it is because people do not accept that truth that so often they are astonished that their plans go astray, they cannot understand why some great scheme is not working.

Now that is the negative side of it, but positively it teaches us many things about the christian Gospel. Just briefly, it teaches us our *deep need* of the Gospel. You understand, do you not, that the Gospel is not just about a way of comfort, a way of guiding us in our lives, a way of developing friendship, a method of social reform, or something like that, The Gospel is about a *Saviour* who will save us from our sins, who will absolve us from our guilt — a Saviour! Always remember that the Gospel is to deal with guilt and pollution and corruption and all its consequences in human hearts and lives. So never settle for anything less in your understanding of the Gospel. You may come to Church for company or because you enjoy the worship, or you like a message and so on. Fine — that is all right as far as it goes but remember that is not what it is all about. Our message is about a Saviour for guilty sinners, and you have not come into touch with the Gospel until you have had dealings with God on that basis.

Then it teaches us the **power** of the Gospel. If we are to be saved it must be by someone who can reach these very depths of our heart. Someone who can throw light into the darkened cells, who can understand what is really going on there and knows all the ramifications of every human heart. David says, "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." Psalm 139:4. Before I speak, God knows my motive, what is really in my heart, and we need someone like that if we are to be saved and our guilt and pollution are to be dealt with. It is only a divine Saviour who can help us, someone who not only knows us, but can regenerate us, really convert us in that deep sense, who can begin that work of renewal which will culminate one day, please God, when we are glorified with Christ, and sin and sorrow and corruption are for ever behind us, if we are believers.

It is a great Trinitarian work that is needful if guilty sinners like us are to be brought to dwell in that light inaccessible where God dwells, God — who no man has seen or can see, nor can we ever come to Him without such a work upon us. And so it teaches us the *power* of the Gospel.

Lastly, it teaches us the **grace** of the Gospel. It is a sobering thought that God knows far far more evil about us than we can know about ourselves. You realise that, don't you?

And the wonderful thing is that, knowing that, if you are a christian, He still chose to elect you as one of His own in eternity. The Lord Jesus Christ was still willing to come and die for you, and knowing far far worse things about us than we can know about ourselves, the Holy Spirit was willing to come and dwell in our hearts and begin to sanctify them and prepare us for glory.

Yes, we learn positive things about these perhaps unpromising words as we approach them and I hope that you will always approach this truth and sayings like this in a positive way and not recoil from them and not let our deceitful hearts wriggle away from them.

I hope that we will take them to ourselves and find that they are the means, they are the bridge, they are the way of access to a fuller knowledge and experience — the glorious saving power of the Trinity.

## Answers to Anxiety

KEITH BERRY (Assistant Pastor, Dunstable Baptist Chapel)

*"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Philippians 4:6.*

If ever a man had cause to be worried it was the Apostle Paul. He is a prisoner; he is under house arrest. He speaks often in this letter to the Philippians of "my chains". Probably that was at Rome — we cannot be dogmatic about that, but there are references to Caesar's household and death by execution might be just round the corner. His life is at risk but, more than that, it is not just a personal concern for survival. The truth of God is at risk because we see in this Epistle and other Epistles how he has to confront error and heresy in the Church of God. In chapter 3 he is dealing with legalism, Judaism and false teaching. Even the Church at Philippi seems to be at risk because of divisions within the Church. That particularly would have caused great heartache and concern to the Apostle Paul because he had a great affection for these Christians. He speaks of them as "My brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown." He says "I have you in my heart". When everyone else did not want to know, when the going was tough, there was one little Church that stood with the Apostle all the way. They expressed it practically through the gift of which we read in c.4:17 — a gift that they sent to him in his need via Epaphroditus. He also has a very real concern and love for them. As we read this Epistle we find it glows with a sense of warmth and loving personal commendation for them. So there is much that is positive and good as he is speaking to them, but also there were problems in this Church. But the Apostle stands before them and says, "Yes, there are problems but I have got the answer to all those problems." He begins back there in chapter 1 with that great verse (21) where he says, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." That is where we have to start. In a sense, then, the whole Epistle from there on is an outworking and an application of that great foundational truth. He takes this great doctrinal truth — the reality and the centrality of Jesus Christ — and in each one of the chapters of this little Epistle he begins to work it out and apply it in detail.

Jesus Christ is the answer to his own personal sufferings. He is the answer to the disunity in the Church. He is the answer to false teaching, legalism. He is the answer to anxiety and worry, and he is not saying this from a theological armchair. He is saying this under house arrest because he has proved it. He says again and again c.4 "I have *learned*". It is something he had to *learn* through experience. The Lord Jesus Christ can give us the resources we need to cope, and even to have great joy so that we can live, not *under* our circumstances, oppressed and beaten down, but as the people of God we can live *above* our circumstances with hope and with joy. He said it first of all to the Philippians — they needed it — and he is saying it to us Christians today. Do you want to know the answer to anxiety in your life if you are a christian? Then follow three simple steps that are laid out for us here in chapter 4:6-9. We all know something about worry and anxiety. The word that is used here and throughout the New Testament highlights the destructive nature of worry even in the life of a Christian. The word literally could be translated 'to divide' 'to rip' and 'to tear apart.' That is what unchecked worry will do to you. We have known this and it can tear us apart physically, emotionally and spiritually. it can have a devastating effect. It will rob us of our joy — it will leave us paralysed in one form or another so that we cannot face up to our responsibilities, and we cannot engage in those activities for the Lord to which we are called. It is a form of moral sickness. In fact it is sin. Now, do not misunderstand me, I am not saying that all worry is sin, but this particular type of worry is. There is an anxious care that the Bible commends. Go back to Phil. 2:20 and there Paul is commending Timothy who was a young man in the ministry and is saying, "I have no one likeminded who will naturally *care* for your state." That is the same word at root and that is speaking of an anxious care and thoughtful concern for others, and of course that is right. Indeed, that is to be sought after in the Christian life because Timothy had the mind of Christ which involves a thoughtful care and concern for others, so that is to be commended. But this kind of care in c.4 is forbidden by God, even condemned by God because it says, "Be *careful* for nothing." Not all care then is wrong, but to be *careful* is wrong. The sense there is being full of care, being taken up with worry even to the point of distraction, and that is very dangerous and hurtful and it is sin, because it is the result of failure — failure to really trust God and roll our burdens upon the Lord. The Word of God confronts such issues because God loves us and He has a care in His heart that we be not paralysed and taken over by overmuch worry. Well, that is the 'sin'-problem and here is a three-fold answer.

**First, you must pray Biblically, v.6.** Now the beauty of this little verse 6 is that it contains nearly every word in the New Testament for prayer. The Bible tells us how to pray through the careful selection of these different words and phrases that we find in this verse. First of all, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by '*prayer*'." That is the general word that is used in the Bible for prayer, the idea behind this word being "face to face" with someone, obviously, in this instance, with God. It is the idea of being in touch constantly, so really it is speaking of a walk with God, of communion with the living God. Now, do you know that this is possible? It is; and I want to ask you is that your enjoyed experience? Communion, living moment by moment in communion with God. A life of worship, a life then of joy in the Lord. It is another way of saying the same thing as "Rejoice in the Lord always." That is a remarkable verse and this is a command from Almighty God for you and for me. Just in case we have any doubt about it He says, "And *again*, I say Rejoice." God's plan and command for our lives is one of rejoicing in the Lord, because, if we are taken over by worry and concern and all those

sort of things, the effect is introspection. We turn in on ourselves and we go down and down and down into that bottomless pit of sin and self. We don't want to do that. God is saying to us in this verse, "Don't be taken up with yourself" — it is the idea rather of 'exaltation.' "Be taken up with the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Focus your whole being on God, on Christ." To Him we are called, then, a life of knowing Him, rejoicing in Him, the wonder of being saved by the grace of God. Then we can say with the Apostle Paul in c.1:20. "That Christ might be magnified in my body whether by life or by death." So we have got to pray if we would beat and conquer worry in our lives. You must pray, but more than that, he goes on to say "By prayer and supplication." Now if the first word was the *general* word, this is the specific word for prayer. This is speaking of a specific petition which is offered to God. This is something that we will need to do every day of our lives, going to God, honestly sharing with God all our needs and all our problems, and, if we are not doing that then what in fact are we saying with our lives? We are saying "Well, really I can cope on my own. Really I don't need God. Really I know better than Jesus Christ." We read this remarkable verse in the 5th of Hebrews speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ "Who in the days of His flesh when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." He did that in His earthly walk as a sinless Man. Well, if He did that in His sinless life how much more do we need daily to pray and be specific.

**Second.** There is another little detail which becomes even more practical and more specific at the end of the verse where it says "Let your *requests* be made known unto God." Actually, the word "requests" could be translated "items". It stresses the actual object and the actual things being prayed for. So again, the idea here is, "Tell the Lord about it; make it known to Him in every detail" and you can do that because the Apostle says later on "For the Lord is at hand," because He is very near to you. God is not far away; He is closer to you than you could ever imagine. In fact, this little phrase "Let your requests be made known *unto* God" that little word 'known' suggests the translation "in the presence of" God. You actually live your life in the very presence of Almighty God your Father. He is at hand. He is nearer to you than this hand is to me. What a comfort to us, and what a means, then, of overcoming our worries to understand that, and in His presence to make our requests known unto God. In the light of that, therefore, surely anxious care is out of place. We must make our cares and worries, then, known unto God. He loves to hear you tell Him about them. He loves you to pour out your heart to Him and also He specially loves you to say "Thank you" to Him.

**Third.** We are to pray "with thanksgiving". That is there right in the heart of the verse. This in many ways is the key to overcoming anxiety because these things for which we are truly thankful we will find very difficult to worry about. Now it is easy for me to say that, I know, but it can be the most difficult thing in the world. You say perhaps "Well, it sounds very good in theory. I wish I could put it into practice, but there are things in my life that are weighing me down and breaking my heart — how can I be thankful for that?" We find it very easy to be thankful for the good gifts that come from God . . . but problems? Well, there is an answer to that. I am not saying it is easy and happens mechanically, but I am trying to help you and myself as we face these things. There is that great verse in Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose." That problem,

you know, is a gift from God who loves you, and you are under direction to give thanks to God for it, because *it* is under obligation ultimately to do you good.

Let me just ask you another question (and this really will take us to the heart of this issue and will put everything in its ultimate perspective.) Are you a Christian? This is an all important question to ask in the context of this discussion about worry. What do I mean? You came to a point in your experience when you understood that you had personally offended a holy God because of your sin. You understood that you were the object of His wrath — you were on the road to hell — but then God stepped in. There was a Divine intervention in your life and you were given *another* sight, not just of yourself, but of the Saviour and you saw His free unmerited love coming out to you in the Person of Christ and you understood why Jesus came into this world. It goes on to say in Romans 8 that it was God that was doing all this — “God Who spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all” and you were given the understanding that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” He came into the world to save you. The Lord Jesus was dying for you. He was shedding His own precious blood to cleanse and to pardon you. That is how much God has loved you. He has saved you for time and eternity. Have you seen that? Now, if you have not and you are not a christian, I must say to you that you have every reason to be terribly anxious and worried and concerned, because, in fact, you are still on that broad road that leads to destruction, and that should be a great cause for concern day and night to you. But I can also say that there is good news for you, that if you fall down before God confessing your sins and turning from them in real repentance before God, seeking mercy through Christ, the Saviour of sinners, He will surely save you and pardon you and make you a new person.

But I am speaking to those who are christians, if these things are true of you, then the greatest cause for your anxiety has been dealt with. You are no longer on the broad road that leads to destruction. You are an heir of eternal life. God is not your Judge; God is now your Father and Saviour, and though we feel at times that all our worries and concerns will crush us, we need to see all these things with the Gospel as the ultimate backdrop. We have to see everything in the light of the fact that “the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me” and, if that is so, God is not going to abandon us. Romans 8:32 again, “How shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?” So I can thank Him in all things, not because I understand everything, but because of the Gospel and because I know from His Word that the God who loves me has a sovereign plan of wisdom and love for my life.

Now, what does the Bible go on to say? “And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” v.7. The peace of God will guard you. It is a military word ‘guard’. This is the idea — the guards are marching up and down outside Paul’s residence and, just as they were keeping guard on him day and night, keeping him *in*, so the Bible says if we will pray like this, then God’s peace will ‘mount a guard’ over our hearts, not keeping us locked *in*, but keeping worry and anxiety and over-much care locked *out*. God’s peace on patrol day and night! But that is conditional. If you do not obey the commands in these verses then you will not enjoy and maintain the peace God has given you in Christ, but which we know we can lose and be without for long periods of time in our christian experience. So, maybe, you are like that. Pray in this fashion. But now we should not only pray Biblically — we must think Biblically and we must act Biblically if we are to maintain the peace of God in our lives.

### Finally let us consider vs. 7-9.

One of the great problems of the worrier is that his mind is set on wrong things. Very often our secret thought life can be so negative, and that is a breeding ground for worry. Your mind is something like a car. If you keep your car in good working order and you follow the rules of the road and keep it on track then that car will function beautifully — it will get you very efficiently from A to B but what if the brakes start to fail or if someone decides to drive on the opposite side of the road? The result of that would be disaster and danger all round. Your mind is like that car, and if you keep your mind in good working order and if you follow in the tracks that God has laid down in His Word, then your mind will function properly, and here are the tracks that God has laid down c.4:8 where the Apostle now is speaking of how we should *think*. “Think on these things.” Meditate on these things. Obviously we find in v.8 the things that we should think about, and basically they are good and beautiful things. Now of course the best and loveliest things that we could ever meditate upon are those Gospel things that I have mentioned already concerning the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is there anything or anyone more lovely than He? Of course not. Is there an object more trustworthy than Christ the Son of God? Of course not. Is there anything more true and noble than the Christ of God in the Gospel? Of course not. “Meditate on these things”. That is meditation. Meditate on Gospel things. That is the most exalted plane on which we are to think. This verse is saying that there are many good and beautiful things in this life which we have the liberty to think on, consider and enjoy as long as they come within the guidelines and precepts of Holy Scripture. Are there not beautiful things in nature? Are there not lovely things in the realm of human art? I know there are terrible things, vile things which we should never consider, but there are lovely things, legitimate things — things to do with our families and friends. There are good gifts from God for our blessing and enjoyment. I am not saying therefore that when we have problems and worries we should stick our heads in the sand and just try and forget about them and hope they will go away. This verse is simply saying that we should not always be those people who with our minds are always focussing on the dark, negative and depressing side of life. It is possible for you as a Christian to have such a mind, and if your secret thought-life is like that then I am not surprised that you are full of worry, full of self-pity, regret and anxiety. Of course you will be like this because you are meditating on those things. But the Bible says “Meditate on these good things, beautiful things, lovely things.” Focus not on the problems, but focus on what God says in His Word as the solution to the problems and arm your mind with these things — the promises of God concerning God Himself, concerning the Christian life, and that means effort. It is a discipline to pray Biblically, to think Biblically, and finally, to ACT Biblically. You might then very well have to change your ways in obedience to the Word of God. V.9 He says “Meditate on these things” and then “the things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard and seen in me, *do*.” As the Apostle Paul was amongst these people as an Apostle, a teacher sent from God, he taught them great things concerning the mystery of the Church, their duties, their responsibilities as members of the Church. He is saying, “I am not with you any more. Do them, practice what you heard being preached and make these things part of your experience. Make them holy habits.” That is the idea, something that we practice habitually. If we consciously disobey the Apostolic precepts laid down in the Epistles and elsewhere we will become worriers. Because we are new creatures we have a new sensitivity — we love God — and if we then disobey — that will cause us great anxiety and concern. But he says here, “Don’t

do that, that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, this do." Model your lifestyle then on consistent obedience to the Word of God and then you will be greatly blessed by God, because he goes on to say, "And the God of peace will be with you." Earlier it was "The peace of God shall be in you" — that is a blessing. here he is saying "The One who gives that peace, *the God of peace* will be with you" in all your ways. Are you serious, Paul? Do you really mean that, even under house arrest, even under the shadow of death? The Apostle Paul would say, "That is right; I am serious. It is not easy. It is something that does not come automatically — I have *learned it*" as he goes on to say in the rest of the chapter, and what he says to us is "If you will pray and act Biblically like this, then you can learn it too." And the One who gives that peace, the God of peace, will be with you in all your ways.

May the Lord help us to do that for His glory. Amen.

## Faith Triumphant

KENNETH ASHWORTH

We have seen in a previous article that the Apostle Peter, writing to those who had been "born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible by the word of God" (1:23), assured them of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you (1:4). Little wonder then that the note of triumph rings throughout the epistle. Although they were facing trials, persecutions and suffering, yet they were "kept by the power of God" (1:5) who "had called them to eternal glory by Christ Jesus" (5:10).

This is the faith which is far more precious than gold and things perishable (1:7) and the sure end is "the salvation of your souls" (1:9). This same note of triumphant faith is found in all the New Testament Epistles. There could not be, for instance, a greater assurance than that found in the last letter St. Paul wrote from his prison house in Rome to young Timothy: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day". He knew that a cruel death was imminent for him yet he joyfully exclaimed: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord shall give me at that day" (2 Timothy 1:12, 4:8). Faith triumphant indeed.

A few days ago I took part in the funeral service of a clerical colleague and it was my privilege to read these matchless verses in 1 Corinthians 15, with the great climax "thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (verse 57), and the same note of triumph prevailed at the graveside "in sure and certain hope of eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ". Yes — the Christian faith is a triumphant faith, triumphant over death, sin, self and circumstances. How tragic that so many turn a deaf ear to its contents, and turn away in complete indifference from its Founder Who alone is the Author of that faith (Hebrews 12:2).



I continued to ponder upon the word "victory" and turned to 1 John 5 verse 4: "This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith". The Apostle goes on to emphasise two things. First that such victorious faith is centred upon and built upon the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (verse 5). Secondly that this victorious faith is sure of eternal life. God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son, so that all who believe on the Name of the Son of God may know that they have eternal life (5:11, 13).

Already attacks upon the Person of the Lord Jesus were assailing the Church in the Apostle's day. John's chief opponent was a certain Cerinthus who claimed that Jesus was the human son of Joseph and Mary, that the Spirit of Christ descended upon Him at His baptism, and departed from Him at His Crucifixion. It was to strengthen Christians in face of such heresy that John wrote his Epistles stressing the vital importance of belief in Jesus, truly Man, truly God. Only so could they possess the faith which is victorious. Throughout the ages such attacks upon the Person of Jesus have been frequent, and not least in this our day both from within and without the Church. How essential it is for Christians today to know Him in whom they believe, to be true to the fundamental doctrines concerning Him which are preserved in the Bible and which by God's grace have resisted all attacks. The Christian faith is triumphant in human lives today simply and solely because it is centred upon the eternal Son of God. How wondrous is God's Sovereign grace by which we know that "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life" (1 John 5:12). To conclude will you just look with me at the Lord Jesus portrayed for us so vividly in the closing verses of Mark Chapter 4. Surely the vivid details of this story came from Simon Peter in whose mind the incident would ever live. Jesus and His disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee when suddenly there was a violent storm. The boat was tossed about on the tempestuous waves so that even the experienced fishermen were afraid. Yet Jesus was fast asleep, with His head on a pillow in the boat. What a picture of the humanity of Jesus. He was so utterly tired that He could sleep through such a storm! It is because He is completely human that we know He can enter with compassion and understanding with our every experience save sin (Hebrews 4:15-16). Yet a few moments later we see Him standing in the boat and at a word calmed the storm and stilled the waves. What majesty and omnipotence is here. He is indeed the Son of God — and all He asks is that we trust Him. "How is it that you do not believe?" He asks the astonished disciples.

We shall find increasingly that to trust Him is to possess that triumphant faith of which we have been thinking. Triumphant because we have a victorious Lord to know, love and serve; we have a victorious message to proclaim to a world which so sorely needs Christ; we have a victorious life to live day by day because "as He is so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Jesus, I am resting, in the joy of what Thou art;  
I am finding out the greatness of Thy loving heart.  
Oh! how great Thy power and wisdom; vaster, broader than the sea;  
Resting 'neath Thy smile, Lord Jesus, earth's dark shadows flee.

# The hand of God

*"None can stay His hand. Daniel 4.35*

The hand of God is His providence, or His wisdom and power in operation for the accomplishment of His will. No one can possibly frustrate His designs. Nothing can throw confusion into His plans. He steadily pursues His object, easily accomplishes His purpose, performs all His pleasure. All His saints are in His hand, therefore they are safe. His hand is at work for them, therefore they shall not be injured. He always works in accordance with His word. His predictions must come to pass. His purposes must be fulfilled. His charge must be safe. Beloved, the hand of God is lifted up to defend you, therefore you are safe. His hand is opened to supply you, therefore you shall not want. His hand is beneath you, therefore you shall not fall. Trust in Jesus, in His wisdom and power. Exercise faith in His providence, it is at work for your welfare. His hand will crush or convert your foes, protect you and supply your wants, guide you through the desert, and lift you up for ever. Look from circumstances to the hand that guides and overrules them; it is your Father's hand, and His hand is moved by His heart, which heart glows with unutterable love to you. He is at work for you, and "None can stay His hand."

"Jehovah's arm shall be my strength,  
And His almighty power  
Will well fulfil His promises,  
And victory ensure."

**Jas. Turner**

## Book Reviews

**A Son is Given. Harry Uprichard. Evangelical Press. pp. 160. £4.95.**

The sub-title 'Christ in Isaiah' throws light on the aim of the writer. Believing that 'All Scripture is about Christ' he examines the book of Isaiah from this point of view. The book traces 'The Coming of Christ', 'Christ's Kingdom', 'The Salvation of Christ', 'The work of Christ', 'The Death of Christ', 'The Gospel of Christ', and 'Light for the Gentiles'.

The book is full of sound exposition and doctrine concerning Christ, and the author's hope is that in reading this study, the heart of the reader will be warmed by the gospel as was that of the Ethiopian Eunuch, our minds enlightened to truth, and our wills called to obedience. It is a mine of spiritual wisdom.

An attractive feature is that the author quotes not only Christian hymns, but the Scottish Paraphrases, as responsive thoughts. His love of musical expression is clear throughout.

Mr Uprichard is Minister of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Ahoghill, N. Ireland, and has lectured in Belfast Bible College.

**W.J.P.**

**Preachers with Power. Douglas F. Kelly. The Banner of Truth Trust. Hardback. pp 230. £9.95.**

This smallish volume is the very important introduction to a long series of volumes emanating from the post-puritan settlements in the Southern States of the U.S.A.

These four men, Daniel Baker, an itinerant, preacher and missionary, an evangelist with power; J. H. Thornwell, Pastor and Professor, who preached his theology with passion, from his Chair at Columbia Theological Seminary; B. M. Palmer, who captured the heart of New Orleans with eloquence, compassion and the Reformed Faith; and J. L. Girardeau, who called South Carolina 'My Mother', and began a unique ministry among the Low country Blacks, before becoming the Professor and Pastor of Columbia; these men were the stalwarts of the South. They laid a sound foundation for the next generation, which was led by R. L. Dabney, the greatest of them all. T. C. Johnson wrote the biography of both Palmer and Dabney, and now Dr. Kelly has written this volume which is an introduction to the history of religion in the Southern States, and the platform from which the later glories of puritanical protestant orthodoxy were proclaimed.

The biographies of Johnson, and the collected works of Dabney (3 vols), Palmer's Life of Thornwell, and the collected works of Thornwell (4 vols) are all published by Banner.

These books are more than history, they are manuals of Gospel Truth, and living experience. For example, Thornwell's defence of the Textus Receptus is the best I have seen! Oh that to-days students and ministers would start with Kelly, and follow through the series, especially the Presbyterians whose history it is. What would follow? A Revival!

**W.J.P.**

**Windows of Truth. Peter Jeffery. The Banner of Truth Trust. pp. 60. £1.50.**

This is a collection of everyday occurrences, transformed into pointed illustrations of the gospel message. It also gives very helpful advice on a number of problems in the christian life. Of such are, How to start offering prayer aloud; The meaning of sanctification; and The distinction between a soul awakened, and a soul saved.

Peter Jeffery is the Pastor of Bethlehem Church, Sandfields, Port Talbot, and wrote also 'Stepping Stones', a New Testament guide for beginners. These are excellent books for beginners in the life of faith.

**W.J.P.**

**Healthy Christian Growth. Sinclair B. Ferguson. The Banner of Truth Trust. pp 25. 95p.**

Many do not realise that spiritual, like physical growth, depends on nourishment, exercise, and environment. This valuable booklet points the way, in (i) Bible study, discipline, training, (ii) worship and knowledge, witness and service, and (iii) fellowship experience and growth in grace. A list of books for further help is added. Recommended for all new christians.

**W.J.P.**

**God's Control Over The Universe. Peter Nelson. Whittles Publishing, Caithness. Booklet. £2.50.**

Dr. Nelson is a lecturer in chemistry at the University of Hull. It is widely taught today that the universe is revolving under fixed laws, but under the operations of chance. How then can God answer prayer, or work out his purposes? This book will be very helpful for students, or others without scientific training, who will appreciate his simple language, and impeccable logic.

**W.J.P.**

**A Dictionary of Bible Symbols. Grace Publications. pp. 176. £4.95.**

This useful paperback was prepared by W. S. Owen, and enlarged by P. A. Grist and A. R. Dowling. It was inspired by a similar book by the Venerable Bede in the eighth century! The Introduction explains the figurative language in the Bible, Parables, allegories, types etc.

The Dictionary itself lists about four hundred words thus used, and explains them with Scripture references. Here, in brief, are a couple of examples: (i) A RAM was an animal used for sacrifice in the Old Testament, so this is a TYPE of the Lord Jesus Christ. But in Daniel 6 it is used to SYMBOLISE the Medo Persian Empire. (ii) ALTAR. Different kinds of altar TYPIFY different aspects of the Saviour's death. An altar of earth suggests His humanity; an altar of unhewn stone shows that no human skill or work can contribute anything to our salvation; an altar of bronze for a burnt offering shows Jesus had to die in order to satisfy the demands of God's holy law on our behalf; an altar of gold reminds us of the preciousness of the death of Christ; altars to idols symbolize the false religions of the world, being the fruit of human imagination.

This volume will contribute much teaching of great value for sermons or study groups. It is a pity that notes on the two sacraments, and on the parables had to be omitted for lack of space.

**W.J.P.**

“Brought safely by His hand thus far,  
Why dost thou now give place to fear?  
How canst thou want if He provide,  
Or lose thy way with such a guide?

Did ever trouble yet befall,  
And He refuse to hear thy call? •  
And has He not His promise passed,  
That thou shalt overcome at last?

He who has helped me hitherto,  
Will help me all my journey through;  
And give me daily cause to raise  
New Ebenezers to His praise.”

(John Newton)