

A MAGAZINE TO ENCOURAGE THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES,
THE PRACTICE OF NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH PRINCIPLES
AND INTEREST IN GOSPEL WORK

Precious SEED

INTERNATIONAL



GVLIELMVS TINDALE MARTYR
OLIM EX AVLA MAGD

'And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years',

Rev. 20. 4.

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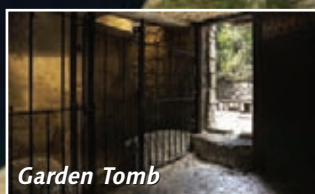
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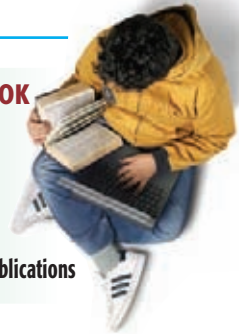
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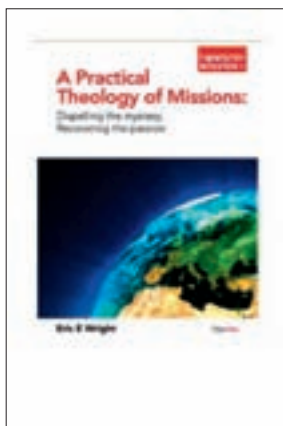
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Book Reviews

By **JOHN BENNETT** and **JOHN SCARBROOK**

Books are available from the publishers shown (or from John Ritchie in the UK or Gospel Folio Press in Canada), and **NOT** from Precious Seed Publications



A Practical Theology of Missions: Dispelling the Mystery; Recovering the Passion Eric E. Wright

Paperback, 380pp. Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ. Price: £12.00. ISBN 978-1-84625-198-6.

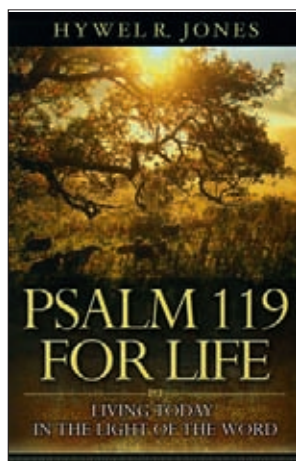
This book addresses the ever-important subject of the church's responsibility to bring to all men and women the message of the gospel. The author, ERIC E. WRIGHT, is a Canadian who, with his wife, spent some sixteen years as a missionary in Pakistan, founding in that country a theological seminary. Since their return to Canada he has been pastor of a church in Toronto, and has also lectured at Toronto Baptist Seminary. The book is divided into eight sections, each covering some aspect of the overall theme – the biblical basis of missions; the Task; the Message; the Missionary; Teamwork; Culture; Strategy; the Work itself. Interspersed throughout the book are examples of contemporary missionary work and challenge.

The book has been written because of the author's conviction that 'A thorough review of missionary theory is necessitated by the condition prevailing in the evangelical church at large . . . Not enough thought has gone into the theological foundations of missionary work'.

It would be easy to review this challenging book by concentrating on the author's ecclesiastical stance, and his views on things future. But to do so would be to miss the real value of this work. In fact, the author raises vital questions which are of concern to all believers who seek faithfully to discharge their responsibilities under the great commission. He challenges the content of much gospel preaching, in particular the failure to call to repentance. Another timely warning concerns the effect of postmodernism on 'evangelicals'. Yet again, he targets the neglect of the New Testament in the way evangelism is undertaken. Perhaps the most searching question of all is, 'Do we really believe that the lost are lost?'

If one can avoid being distracted by the author's views as outlined above, this will prove a challenging book.

[Our thanks to Ed Hotchin, Hucknall, Nottingham, England, for this review]



Psalm 119 For Life: Living Today In The Light Of The Word Hywel R. Jones

Paperback, 156 pp. Evangelical Press, Faverdale North, Darlington, DL3 0PH. Price: £9.50. ISBN 978-0-85234-703-4.

Under the title 'Psalm 119 For Life' HYWEL JONES offers twenty-two studies in this psalm, with the sub-title, 'Living Today In The Light Of God's Word'. Previously Editorial Director of the Banner of Truth Trust and Principal of London Theological Seminary, he is now Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Seminary, California. These studies began life as a series of devotional addresses at that seminary. In his own words, his purpose in writing this book was his belief that 'attention needs to be given to the content and purpose of Psalm 119 in relation to Christians and the Church'.

The introduction, which deserves to be read carefully, covers the language of the psalm, and its timelessness; the form of the psalm, noting its acrostic structure; and its theme, the word of God, which the psalmist has considered under eight different nouns, the meanings of which are briefly explained. The author stresses the relevance of the psalm to today's believers 'at a time when the Church has largely moved Holy Scripture to the margins of its own confession and proclamation, worship and witness'. There follows a discussion on authorship, and the position which the psalm occupies in the Psalter. Thereafter come the twenty-two studies.

Is this book a commentary, a summary, or an aid in one's private devotional life? The answer is that it may fulfil any of these purposes. As a commentary it does not set out to supersede the weightier works which fill our bookshelves. However, it will signpost the key themes of the psalm, and allow the reader to follow these up in other works. But these studies are essentially devotional, and it is in this role that they will be of most help.

[Our thanks to Ed Hotchin, Hucknall, Nottingham, England, for this review]



Empty Arms Keren Baker

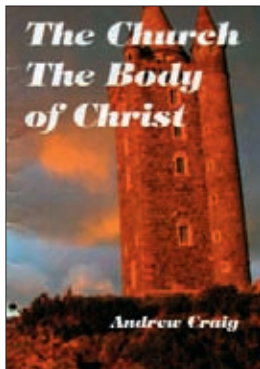
Hardback, 128pp. Published by Evangelical Press, Grange Close, Faverdale North, Darlington, DL3 0PH. Price £7.95. ISBN 978-0-85234-704-1.

'This book is about my journey through grief, a journey that is still continuing . . . It is simply a collection of lessons learnt, some of which have been forged indelibly on my heart in the furnace of bereavement'.

For those who have not experienced the loss of a little child, the way in which Keren Baker's world fell apart is difficult to imagine. In spite of the medical attention of hospital staff her two-year-old daughter succumbed to a rare bacterial infection. This honest and open account of how the author and her family coped with such a devastating blow is a remarkable story.

This is an interesting little book that is a testimony to an ordinary woman and her harrowing experience. However, it is more than that; it is also an account of the faithfulness of her Saviour, 'We thought we couldn't bear the pain, but we'll never understand how much more unbearable it would have been without Him. We really were carried; I see that now'.

Although, as the author states, grief is a very personal thing, there is much practical help and advice in the book. BAKER deals with the need to say 'No'. In chapter 5 she looks at doing something positive and in chapter 6 she deals with creating memories as part of the process of rebuilding. But, in chapter 10, BAKER also encourages the reader to 'let the Bible inspire you'. In the final chapter, 'Helping others with empty arms', there is a list of practical ideas that might help all of us to 'Be available . . . Be faithful . . . Be prepared to cry . . . Be honest . . . Be spiritual' in supporting those who experience such pain. This is a book well worth reading!



The Church the Body of Christ Andrew Craig

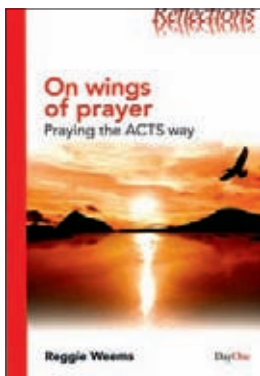
Paperback, 36pp. Published by Brooklands Gospel Centre, c/o 2 Cherryhill Crescent, Dundonald, Belfast, BT16 1JQ, Northern Ireland. Price £2.95.

This booklet covers two main issues as a record of ministry given by the author in the Brooklands Gospel Centre during 2009. As the author states, the first part of the booklet is a 'study [which] deals with the aspect of the local church as a Body'. The second part of the booklet looks at the subject of headship. Although these are subjects for which there is a plethora of other material, the author brings a freshness to the study that is clear and well referenced by scripture.

The first part of the booklet is dealt with under six simple headings: Conception; Control; Coordination; Composition; Characteristics; and Care. Clearly, in 36 pages it would be difficult to provide a detailed study but it is a simple restatement of truth that would prove helpful for new believers or those not familiar with the New Testament pattern.

The subject of headship, which forms the second part of the booklet, is covered in greater detail. The author clearly presents the issue that in the local church 'the only glory to be seen is God's'. This means that men should gather with their heads uncovered and women with their heads covered. However, there is a challenge as CRAIG states, 'The covering should not constitute another eye-catching and costly form of glory'. For this reviewer there was an unqualified and, as such, unfortunate statement at the close of the book. It should not be implied that the participation and deportment of women is at the discretion of elders.

Overall, this is a helpful booklet that could prove useful as a tool in counselling those seeking fellowship in a local church as it presents a simple outline of the truth of the body of Christ.



On wings of prayer Reggie Weems

Paperback, 106pp, Published by Day One Publications, Ryelands Road, Leominster, HR6 8NZ. Price £5.00. ISBN 978-1-84625-178-8.

One of the most difficult aspects of the Christian life is prayer. As the author says in his introduction, 'Reading a book on prayer can inspire you, but only praying can transform you'. How many of us can truly say that we have a transforming prayer life?

The aim of this book is to present what the author believes to be a scriptural formula for prayer described by the letters of the words ACTS – Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. Drawing upon examples from the teaching of the Lord, Luke 18, the examples of Hezekiah, 2 Kgs. 19, and Jeremiah, Jer. 32, REGGIE WEEMS shows how our personal prayer life can be affected by learning from the lives of others. His chapter on thanksgiving is particularly pertinent. As he states, 'The Bible clearly teaches that

God – not unbelievers or even believers – is to be the target of our worship. Corporate worship should have an audience of one (Ps. 34:3)'. Similarly, in his chapter on supplication, the writer offers sound advice, 'The secret of a successful prayer life is to discover what God wants done and then to pray according to his will. That's what praying in "Jesus' name" is all about'.

On a subject that is both personal as well as corporate it will be difficult to find universal agreement. However, the author gives much food for thought in his desire to assist the prayer lives of God's people and there is profit in such an exercise. One thing this book would seek to do is to exalt the God to whom we come in prayer.

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'God remembered Abraham', Gen. 19. 29

Abraham had risen early in the morning and taken the journey to the vantage point he had occupied before. From that position he looked out over the plain to behold a scene of devastation. The once thriving cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were gone and 'the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace', Gen. 19. 28.

With reverence and yet with passion, Abraham had prayed the day before. Thinking of the fate of his nephew Lot, Abraham had entreated the throne of God that if 'ten [righteous] shall be found there', 18. 32, God would spare the city, in keeping with His righteousness. Now, as he observed the outcome of divine judgement, he must have wondered as to the safety of Lot.

In seeking to resolve the disagreement between his herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot, Abraham had given the first choice of pasture to Lot. As he became aware of Lot's capture at the hands of Chedorlaomer, Abraham had risked his life and the lives of his men to rescue Lot, only to see him return to the city of Sodom. Had not Abraham done all that he could? The spiritual care and concern that Abraham had shown towards his nephew was considerable and commendable. Did not this wayward relative deserve what was coming to him as the consequence of his own folly?

What heartache many of the saints of God have suffered as a result of the folly of their loved ones. How true the words of the Lord through Ezekiel, 'ye have made the heart of the righteous sad', 13. 22! What should be our response in the time of yet another crisis? Abraham's example is remarkable. He brought the matter before his God. In the situation that Lot unknowingly faced, Abraham could do no more. He prayed!

As far as the biblical record unfolds, Abraham did not know what had become of Lot once God's judgement had fallen upon the cities of the plain. Was Lot safe? Had Lot perished? What of his family? The evidence of the judgement of God was unmistakeable. What had Abraham to cling to in this moment? The answer is given us in chapter 18 verse 25, 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' Abraham's knowledge of his God was what could sustain him. He might not know the fate of Lot but God knew and he could rest in the assurance that God would act in righteousness, in complete accord with that essential facet of His character. Let us take courage and continue to pray for those we love in the knowledge that God *will* do right.

There is much food for thought in this issue. Apart from the on-going series on prophetic subjects and church truth there is also the exposition of Philippians and the character studies of personalities associated with the apostle Paul. Alongside those articles, there is new material from Cyril Cann and Malcolm Davis. We thank all those who give of their time so readily to support this work and pray that, as a consequence, there might be fruit in the lives of God's people.

JOHN BENNETT

Ministry Articles Editor



The event described in passages such as 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, John chapter 14 and 1 Corinthians chapter 15, often referred to as 'the rapture', is mentioned to reassure, comfort and encourage God's people. Sadly, it is now often the subject of debate and even division among Christians, especially in relation to when it will take place and whether it is a distinct event from the Lord's appearing on earth to reign. The 'pre-tribulationist' position, which this article supports, is that the rapture is a distinct event taking place before the tribulation described in Revelation chapters 6-19, and is primarily an event for the church. Others believe it is synonymous with the Lord's appearing and that it will take place after or post-tribulation. However, some believe it will take place at the mid-point of the tribulation.

The events of the tribulation are referred to in numerous passages in both testaments and are part of what is generally referred to as the 'day of the Lord'. The timing of this has always been a question of interest and concern to God's people. This can be seen in many of the prophets such as Daniel, Zechariah, Joel, and Isaiah, but also among the Lord's disciples, for example, in Matthew chapter 24 verse 3. Indeed, it is in answer to them that the Lord delivers His detailed discourse of chapters 24 and 25, describing the 'day of the Lord' and confirming the 'Great Tribulation', previously described in Daniel chapter 9. Parts of this discourse, and other references to the Lord's second coming to earth in judgement, are also found in Mark and Luke's Gospels but are conspicuously absent from John's. In John chapter 16 verse 33, the Lord does warn the disciples that they will experience 'tribulation', as indeed they and countless saints have since, but He does not mention 'The Tribulation'. In fact, in contrast to the other Gospels, John alone directly refers to the Lord's own being received into His 'Father's house' and beholding His glory, 'where I am', John 14. 3; 17. 24, revealing to them their removal to heaven rather than His return to earth.

Paul's letters to the Thessalonians are

WHY A PRE-TR

particularly taken up with the coming of the Lord, which is mentioned in every chapter of the first letter. In chapter 1 verse 10, he reminds them that the coming One will deliver us 'from the wrath to come'. In chapter 4, he deals with the saints' concern that their brothers and sisters who had died will somehow miss out on this event and reassures them that we will be 'caught up together with them . . . to meet the Lord in the air', once again indicating our removal from earth rather than Christ's return to earth. In the second letter, their concern seems to be that persecution or 'tribulation' is so great that they fear that they are already in the 'day of the Lord', 2. 2 NASB, NKJV. Paul explains that this is not possible as certain things must take place, including the revealing of the 'man of sin', and goes on to refer to 'what restrains' in verse 6 and 'He who restrains . . . until He is taken out of the way', v. 7 NASB. While some

have sought to find a very complicated and obscure meaning for these verses, the straightforward explanation, from reading the passage without external influence, is that the 'what' is the church and the 'He' is the Holy Spirit who indwells the church. This complete removal of the divine person and His people before the 'day of the Lord' would explain why evil is then completely unrestrained and there needs to be a fresh 'pouring out' of His Spirit in that day, Joel 2. 28.

Piecing these passages together, I suggest that only a pre-tribulation removal of God's people, 'the church', satisfies all the requirements outlined. In summary, it removes us to heaven, enables us to see His glory there, and preserves us from the coming wrath. Indeed, a simple panorama of the

By **ALASTAIR SINCLAIR**
Crosshouse, Scotland

book of Revelation, with the rapture pictured by John at the beginning of chapter 4, would find us in heaven observing the Lord in all the glory of chapters 4 and 5 before the tribulation of chapters 6-19, followed by our marriage to and return with the Lord to reign with Him, chapter 20. This is further supported by the complete absence of any mention of the church or churches in all of chapters 6-19, despite numerous mentions before and after.

An article of this length cannot deal with all the objections to the above proposition but we will consider a couple of major ones. Many who believe in a post- or mid-tribulation position seek to equate the 'last trump' of 1 Corinthians chapter 15 with the seventh trumpet of Revelation chapter 11 verse 15. While

this seems plausible on the surface, it has several problems. Firstly, the inspired scripture could easily have used the term, 'seventh trumpet' instead of 'last trump' to remove all doubt, if they are the same. Secondly, the 'trump' of 1 Corinthians chapter 15 is not sounded by angels or men, as with those referred to in Revelation, but is the 'trump of God', 1 Thess. 4. 16. For those who hear it, just as many have had played for them what we call 'the last post', it is indeed 'the last trump' for them. Perhaps, as we have suggested, this is pictured in Revelation chapter 4 verse 1 when John hears the 'voice of a trumpet', depicting the final call home of the church. Interestingly, the Lord had indicated the possibility of John remaining 'till I come' in John chapter 21 verse 22. Finally, there is further reference to 'trumpeters' in Revelation





TRIBULATION RAPTURE?

chapter 18 verse 22, so the seventh trumpet sounded by an angel in chapter 11 is not even the 'last' in the Book of Revelation.

The main objection to the pre-tribulation rapture tends to be the contention that it is simply a way to 'avoid' going through the tribulation. God's people, including many today in Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist countries, have always experienced great tribulation. Indeed, most, if not all, of the writers of the New Testament scriptures were martyred. It may even be the case that the virulent rise of secularism and atheism in Western lands will soon result in terrible persecution for God's people here. However, all of these trials and tribulations have been at the hands of wicked men not at the hand of a sovereign God! The events of Matthew chapters 24 and 25, as well as Revelation chapters 6-19, while containing man's rage against God's

interesting pictures or foreshadowings of the Lord coming for His people. Take, for example, Genesis chapter 24 where Rebekah, accompanied by an unnamed servant, is brought on her journey across the wilderness towards her betrothed, but as yet unseen, bridegroom, who then comes to meet her and accompanies her to private consummation. Surely, this is a picture of the church, sealed and betrothed by the Holy Spirit, brought to private union with Christ before public revealing? Notice further John's Gospel views the disciples as the embryo of a New Testament church rather than a remnant of a failed Jewish nation. In chapter 5 verse 25 the Lord introduces the idea of an imminent and selective resurrection which 'now is', in addition to the two all-inclusive resurrections of the just and unjust in verse 29. In chapter 11, the pinnacle of the Gospel, the Lord 'comes' to a company of His own divided by death. He informs Martha

supper is probably the only event recorded in John's Gospel out of chronological sequence, perhaps to preserve the typical order of future events.

In conclusion, does it matter whether the rapture is pre-, mid- or post-tribulation? Well, yes it does. Firstly, God does not want us to be ignorant and, as friends, the Lord Jesus wishes to share His plans with His 'friends', John 15. 15. Secondly, if this event is imminent it should have a practical import. We cannot assume there are still at least seven years (or half this for mid-point) to evangelize, engage in greater service for the Lord, or resolve issues with fellow believers. If Christ really could return today all these things take on greater urgency. We are not looking for prophetic signs or fulfilments, only Peter's death and Jerusalem's destruction were required and have long since happened. We may be seeing future events casting

people, are all in fact orchestrated by God Himself, building up to His awesome judgement on mankind. 2 Peter chapter 2 verse 9 reminds us, 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished'.

There are, of course, many biblical precedents for God's people being removed before judgement. Consider Noah and his family being in the ark and above the judgement of the flood, and Lot being removed before the destruction of Sodom. These are a strong argument against a partial rapture of only the faithful, as Lot, though a believer, was not living a godly life. Notice also the removal of Enoch and Elijah before moments of great judgement. In addition to these precedents, there are some other

of something more than the 'resurrection of the last day' when He, as 'the resurrection and the life', will not only raise the dead, like Lazarus, but he who 'liveth and believeth in me shall never die'. The Lord then demonstrates this with an immediate out-resurrection from among the dead of one who 'hears' His voice. Observe that this event not only pictures the rapture but outlines its position. It is followed by a supper in chapter 12 where He is in the company of Simon a leper who has been changed, Mark 14. 3, and Lazarus, who was raised from sleep and changed from a decaying body, picturing 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 51. This supper precedes His coming to Jerusalem for both glory and judgement, surely a picture of the rapture, the marriage supper and return in glory in that order. It should be noted that this

their shadow on today. Opposition to God and His people is rising. Wars, economic chaos and moral decline are everywhere. Man-made and natural disasters are prevalent and men's hearts fail them with fear and uncertainty. In the midst of this the child of God should, as intended by the Lord Jesus, avoid distress, take comfort, and be united in evangelism in the light of an imminent and certain return of the Lord Jesus for His people. May this imminent event motivate us to live in the light of it now!

ALASTAIR SINCLAIR is in fellowship with the assembly at Crosshouse, Ayrshire, and is active in oral ministry throughout the UK. He writes regularly for assembly magazines and is married with a family. He works in the IT industry.





'Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?' Gal. 5. 7. Thus might run the epitaph of Asa, King of Judah. His start was auspicious but his end lamentable. He started in fellowship with God and triumphed in the battle. He finished at distance from God in disease and disability. Here was a man who, after a promising start to his career, faded and failed. What are the practical lessons that we might learn from the record of scripture in relation to Asa?

KING ASA

This is the third article in a series that explores the practical lessons that we can all learn from the biblical record of the lives of the Kings of Judah.

By **JOHN BENNETT**
Kirkby-in-Ashfield, England

A time of fruitfulness

From the outset of his reign we are told that he 'did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father', 1 Kgs. 15. 11. He had respect to the laws and requirements of God and the legacy left by his forebears in respect to obedience to these things. He demonstrated this: morally, 'he took away the sodomites out of the land', 1 Kgs. 15. 12; spiritually, 'he took away the altars of the strange gods . . . and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers', 2 Chr. 14. 3-4; and militarily, 'he built fenced cities in Judah . . . and he had no war in those years', 2 Chr. 14. 6.

Clearly, Asa had a heart for the things of God and taught the people of God by his example. He also had a concern for the safety of the nation because he prepared and equipped a formidable army to defend his boundaries. But what is most instructive is Asa's response to the invasion of the Ethiopian army. The battle was set in array and though the forces of Ethiopia were significant yet Asa could have met them with his own 'mighty men of valour', v. 8. However, he does not rely upon the ingenuity of his generals, or the equipment he had provided for his men, or their battle experience; 'Asa cried unto the Lord his God', v. 11.

What power there is in prayer! Asa lays claim to that power. There is power because of: relationship, 'O Lord, thou art our God'; dependence, 'we rest on thee'; and God's desire to preserve His honour, 'in thy name we go against this multitude', v. 11. Asa asserts God's concern for His people and His desire for their preservation and protection and harnesses His power to achieve them. The subsequent victory and total

destruction of the numerically superior Ethiopian army is a testament to answered prayer and the intervention of God. The glory is His! But, immediately following this comprehensive rout of the opposition, there is also a demonstration of God's grace. Azariah the prophet is sent to Asa to remind him, 'The Lord is with you, while ye be with him', 2 Chr. 15. 2. How easy it is to allow the high points in our spiritual experience to foster the impression that we no longer need God's presence and power. Asa's predecessors had learnt that lesson, sometimes with bitter repercussions.

However, Asa can be taught and he responds to the call of God. 'He took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin', v. 8. He also renewed the altar of the Lord and offered unto the Lord of the animals that had been taken from the Ethiopians as spoils of victory. With increased vigour the people follow Asa's lead and renew their allegiance to Jehovah.

The peace and safety that Judah enjoys as a result of divine blessing is extensive for 'there was no more war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, v. 19. As a consequence of the evidence of the Lord's presence, many out of Israel sought to align themselves with Judah and Benjamin and to enjoy the prosperity that was theirs. Blessing seems to follow blessing!

A time of fear

If we weren't all too aware of the fickleness of our own hearts, we might be shocked at Asa's reaction to the activity of Baasha, king of Israel. Why should Asa, who had proved so faithful when faced with the enemies of the people of God, fail when confronted by the evil designs of his own brethren in Israel? Surely, the God that had defeated the Ethiopians could render any threat from Baasha as useless. However, instead of relying upon the God who delivered him before, Asa sends some of

the treasures of the house of the Lord to the king of Assyria to seek his assistance to divert the attention of Baasha away from Judah. We ought not to lose sight too of what this action says about Asa's valuation of the treasures of the house of the Lord. Are we prepared to trade the things of God for a moment's peace? Do we consider it an advantage to seek the friendship of the world?

It is one thing to face the enemies from without. It is quite another to stand against the enemies within. Paul was aware of the 'grievous wolves' that would come in from outside but he also warned the Ephesian elders that there would be those 'of your own selves' who would arise 'speaking perverse things', Acts. 20. 29, 30. How would we cope then? It is a phrase in Jeremiah chapter 41 verse 9 that supplies the insight into Asa's response to the activity of Baasha – fear!

There is another lesson in these events. When we can see a simple solution to a problem, it is easy to act without prayer and, thus, without reference to God. Solomon's counsel was wise; 'In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths', Prov. 3. 6. The response to the Ethiopian attack was just as necessary and relevant to the threat posed by Baasha.

How gracious of God that He sends another prophet that Asa might learn the lesson of dependence upon Him!

A time of failure

It takes a faithful man to be the bearer of bad news to a king! Hanani came with a message from God but not one that Asa wanted to hear, or, worse still, to respond to favourably. There seems a sense in which Asa has grown spiritually but has become proud of his achievements, even though they are solely the result of divine blessing. How difficult to remain humble in the midst of





popular acclaim! Asa's kingdom had grown: materially, 'they fell to him out of Israel in abundance', 2 Chr. 15. 9; spiritually, 'they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart', v. 12; militarily, 'the Lord gave them rest round about', v. 15; and in influence, 'Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa', 2 Chr. 16. 4.

Yet, 'pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall', Prov. 16. 18. We know the scripture and the timely teaching of the wise man. Do we live in the good of it? It would be easy to sit in judgement of king Asa and yet still harbour the same spirit and response to the word of God that he did. 'Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison house', 2 Chr. 16. 10. How dangerous when we fail to heed the word of God and also seek to prevent Him speaking to us again!

What Asa could not do was to prevent the word of God being brought to fruition. Hanani had said, 'Henceforth thou shalt have wars', v. 9. In what way this was enacted we are not told but there is a sense in which this judgement would appear to be added to, as 'Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great', v. 12. Asa had stopped walking in communion with his God and it is instructive that the affliction he suffered should affect his feet.

The sadness of this final period of Asa's life is that in his affliction 'he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians', v. 12. What should have brought him to his knees in prayer led him to seek only the assistance of the doctors of the day. He remained reliant upon the flesh and the solutions prescribed by the flesh and, as a consequence, lived only two years longer. How sad that a man who had reached such heights in his personal and national relationship with his God should end his days so ignominiously. Yet, 'whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning', Rom. 15. 4. 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall', 1 Cor. 10. 12.

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ARE YOU STANDING BY THE CROSS?

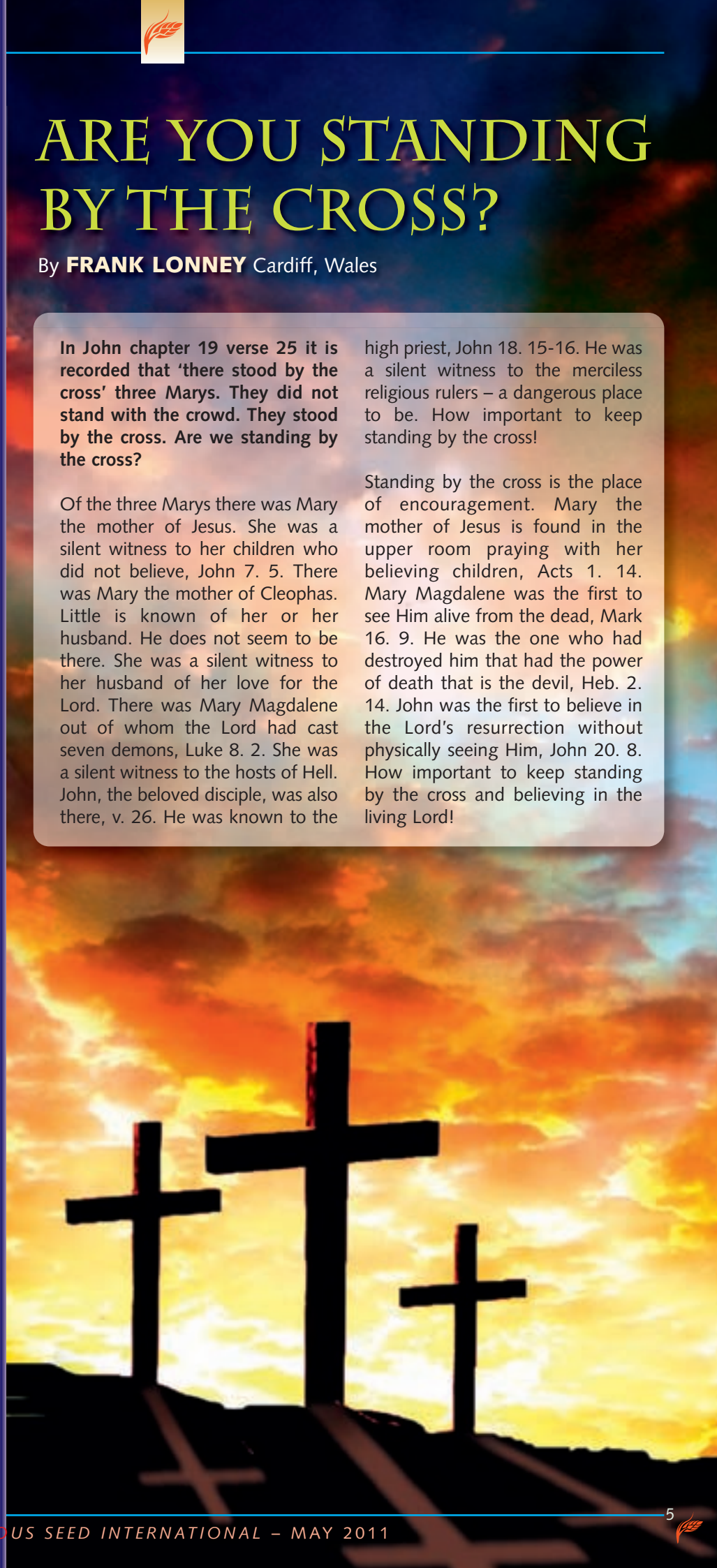
By **FRANK LONNEY** Cardiff, Wales

In John chapter 19 verse 25 it is recorded that 'there stood by the cross' three Marys. They did not stand with the crowd. They stood by the cross. Are we standing by the cross?

Of the three Marys there was Mary the mother of Jesus. She was a silent witness to her children who did not believe, John 7. 5. There was Mary the mother of Cleophas. Little is known of her or her husband. He does not seem to be there. She was a silent witness to her husband of her love for the Lord. There was Mary Magdalene out of whom the Lord had cast seven demons, Luke 8. 2. She was a silent witness to the hosts of Hell. John, the beloved disciple, was also there, v. 26. He was known to the

high priest, John 18. 15-16. He was a silent witness to the merciless religious rulers – a dangerous place to be. How important to keep standing by the cross!

Standing by the cross is the place of encouragement. Mary the mother of Jesus is found in the upper room praying with her believing children, Acts 1. 14. Mary Magdalene was the first to see Him alive from the dead, Mark 16. 9. He was the one who had destroyed him that had the power of death that is the devil, Heb. 2. 14. John was the first to believe in the Lord's resurrection without physically seeing Him, John 20. 8. How important to keep standing by the cross and believing in the living Lord!





THE ELDER AND THE ROLE OF LE

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of a short series on this very needy and practical area of elders. It is designed to emphasize the spiritual nature of this work and how we need to encourage younger men to be exercised about the responsibility of caring for the flock of God locally.

The Bible's 'take' on this is completely different to Christendom's practice. We must disabuse ourselves of current religious practices and look to the word of God when considering assembly government. Sadly, even in some assemblies the pattern of the world, commercial or religious, is rated above that divinely revealed in the scriptures.

Leadership is to be exercised corporately by a plurality of elders in the local assembly in which they are in fellowship.

Leadership is a grace – a gift from God, NOT a natural talent

In the list of spiritual gifts given to believers at conversion by the sovereign choice of the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 12. 28, following 'helps' we have 'governments'. Some believers will have been given this gift but by no means all.

Confirmation that elders are appointed by the Holy Spirit's choice can be found in Acts, 'the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers', 20. 28. Natural gift or talent which we use in our working life has no bearing whatsoever on the gift distributed to us by the Spirit for use in the local assembly. W. TREW said, 'Overseers in the assembly are not a body of control or a board of management'. Those chosen and gifted of the Spirit need no institutional training or ecclesiastical ordination to function for God. When God calls, God equips.

The word 'government' is the same word translated 'master' of the ship, Acts 27. 11. The 'master' was responsible for setting the course of the vessel based on the charts available to him. Similarly, elders are the 'helmsmen' responsible for giving the assembly its steer, a sense of direction and purpose based on our chart and compass, the Bible.

Enumerated in Romans chapter 12 verse 8, we have the gifts given to the

assembly by the Father. Note, 'he that ruleth, with diligence'.

The word 'ruleth' comes from the Greek *proistemi* which means 'to stand before' and, hence, 'to lead'. The shepherds of old did not drive the sheep from behind but led the sheep from the front, 'He leadeth me', Ps. 23. 3; 'He led the flock', Exod. 3. 1. Elders are not to drive the flock from behind but to lead from the front by example. *Proistemi* is used in the following passages: 1 Thess. 5. 12, 'over'; 1 Tim. 3. 4, 5, 12, 'rule'; 5. 17, 'rule'; Titus 3. 8, 14, 'maintain'.

Christ gives gifted men to the church – evangelists, pastors and teachers, Eph. 4. 11.

The word 'pastors' is simply 'shepherds', that is, those who have a flock to care for. The thrust of these passages clarifies the type of leadership God approves of: a helmsman setting the course by chart; one who leads from the front by example; a shepherd with the sheep's interest at heart. Here there are no hierarchical structures, ecclesiastical training, or one-man ministry!

Leadership is delegated, NOT executive

In 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 1 where service is the context, Paul and his co-workers call themselves 'under-rowers' of Christ, such is their humility and subservience to Christ. In 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 4 we conclude that as Christ is the Chief Shepherd the elders are under-shepherds. Their authority is administrative, not legislative. They apply the scriptures; they do not write them or add to them, as the Pharisees attempted to do.

Their responsibility is to the Lord and to the sheep, 'other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring', John 10. 16. 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 25 reminds us that you 'are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls'. The Lord is the Owner of the sheep, not just their Shepherd and Overseer.

Those with leadership responsibilities must recognize that they do not own the sheep. They act on behalf of the Chief Shepherd: a work that demands

accountability, Heb. 13. 17, a work that will be rewarded by the Chief Shepherd when He appears, if, indeed, reward is merited. The assembly is the Lord's: Acts chapter 20 verse 28 teaches us its preciousness to the heart of God, 'purchased with his own blood'. He is the Purchaser and Proprietor of the assembly – leadership is subject to His gift and grace.

Leadership is spiritual, NOT secular

The assembly's leaders receive a spiritual gift in order to do the work and are appointed by the Holy Spirit, Himself. Just as Christ is 'the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls' so the responsibility of the elders is primarily concerned with believers' souls: 'they watch for your souls', Heb. 13. 7.

In this chapter there are three references to elders and the saints' appropriate responses.

Consider their Witness – 'remember them', Heb. 13. 7.

Consider their Watchfulness – 'obey them', v. 17.

Consider their Worth – 'salute . . . them', v. 24.

In each case the word 'rule' is *hegeomai*. It means 'to lead with authority', 'to preside' and is elsewhere translated 'governor' and 'judge'. J. N. DARBY translates as 'leaders'.

Consider their Witness – remember them!

The elders are spoken of in the past tense, 'which have had the rule over you'. Saints are to recall the qualities of spiritual leadership manifest in the teaching and testimony of these recently deceased elders. Consider the issue of their manner of life, that is, 'imitate or mimic their faithful example'.

Consider their Watchfulness – obey them!

'Obey' is translated 'trust' on eight occasions and 'confidence' on six occasions. Thus, we are to show every confidence in our elders by being compliant with their teaching. They are to watch for our souls, that is, our spiritual condition. The word 'watch' signifies 'sleeplessness'. They are to be constantly alert, watching for our soul's wellbeing. It is a twenty-four hours a day responsibility. Their alertness now is matched by their accountability at the

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LEADERSHIP IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

judgement seat of Christ for the flock that they shepherded. Will it be an occasion of joy or sorrow? If sorrow, this will be unprofitable for the sheep when it comes to reward or loss.

Consider their Worth – salute them!

Greet your elders with a sense of their work and worth in mind. We are desperately short of men of the calibre described here. How many of our present-day leaders fit the scriptural photofit? Leaders of the character of Hebrews chapter 13 are worth their weight in gold. Do not be critical of them but: remember them; trust them; greet them!

Leadership is exemplified in work, NOT enshrined in an office

'If a man desireth the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work', 1 Tim. 3. 1. 'Office of a bishop' is one word in Greek, *episcopos*: overseership. 'Office' does not occur in the text at all. The context of the passage is 'a good work'. It is by the job that they do that saints recognize their elders, just as you recognize a bus driver because he drives a bus! 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 12-13 state, 'Know them which labour among you . . . esteem them . . . for their work's sake'.

The assembly is not a democracy where matters are put to a vote or a show of hands is called for. Leadership is entrusted by God to gifted, godly men designated elders or overseers. The image of Daniel chapter 2 suggests God's evaluation of democracy!

Leadership is corporate, NOT individual

The 'law of first mention' regarding assembly elders leads us to Acts chapter 11 verse 30 where it is clear that the assembly at Jerusalem had a plurality of elders who acted collectively on behalf of the believers. Most references are in the plural. Where the singular occurs it is used in a generic sense, for example, 'rebuke not an elder', 1 Tim. 5. 1.¹

Just as one-man ministry is contrary to the scriptural principle of the priesthood of all believers, talk of 'the leading brother' is equally unscriptural. Ideally, an assembly will have several elders who are seen to work corporately and collectively, not merely as individuals. It is

recognized that some small assemblies, however, do not have the luxury of several elders though they would be delighted if this were the case.

The corporate nature of the elders' work may be alluded to in the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, based upon the idea that the expression 'angel of the church' refers to the totality of elders in each autonomous assembly.

Leadership is to be exemplary, NOT dictatorial

'Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock', 1 Pet. 5. 3.

The elders are to be patterns, not princes; leaders, and not lords in respect of the assembly. It is God's 'heritage', *kleroo*, a word from which we get 'clergy'. The whole assembly is thus seen to be God's clergy or heritage not just the leaders only! This is diametrically opposed to the tradition of the world which divides the church into clergy and laity.² Thus the leaders are not to lord it over God's clergy, that is, the assembly. They are not to dominate the Lord's people. They should not exhibit the characteristics of the Nicolaitans who rejoiced in victory over the people. God hated this oppression of His saints, Rev. 2. 6, 15. The division of the church into clergy and laity is contrary to the mind and will of God. 'Ensamples', *tupos*, is better translated 'model' or 'example to be imitated', hence, leadership by example.

The idea of 'whose faith follow', Heb. 13. 7, is to 'mimic their faithful example'. By way of contrast, consider Diotrephes in John's third epistle. The second epistle introduces us to the seeds of heresy; the third epistle to the seeds of cleresy. Diotrephes is a self-assertive man who refuses to show hospitality to itinerant preachers. He delights in the limelight and enforces his will on others who open their homes to the Lord's servants. This leads to physical violence as he 'casteth them out of the church'. Men like this we can do without! John's exhortation is, 'Follow not that which is evil but that which is good'. 'Follow' brings us back to the idea of imitating, 1 Pet. 5. 3; Heb. 13. 7.

In closing this article, we would emphasize that leadership is totally dependent on the qualities enumerated in the Pastoral Epistles being lived out in the lives of spiritual elders.

References

- 1 References to plurality: Acts 14. 23; 20. 17; Phil. 1. 1; Titus 1. 5; Jas. 5. 14.
- 2 See also W. E. VINE, *The Church and the Churches*, Pg. 60 ; PLUMPTRE, *St. Peter and St. Jude*, Pg. 153, Cambridge Bible Series.

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Editor's Note: The authors of this article are anonymous and this is appropriate for this anonymity derives solely from the depth of love felt for the family, even though their spiritual condition leaves so much to be desired. Readers must also appreciate that in order to preserve the privacy of everyone, not everything referred to in these lines applies in equal measure to each person within the family concerned.

Train up a child in th

It is not our objective, nor would it be appropriate, to present a detailed account of all that has transpired in our family experience; and for this reason it has been necessary to omit much detail. However, neither do we want to create the impression that we have endured significant tribulations; we have been spared much of the heartache that other Christian parents have had to face. Thankfully, we always enjoyed an excellent relationship with our children, and continue to do so now that they have left home. Our principal sadness stems from their lack of spiritual interest, and a lifestyle so different to what we taught them. One of our constant prayers is that we would not get so used to seeing them 'in the world' that it would no longer be a burden to us.

Perhaps there will be many who will consider this article to be strange, maybe even totally inappropriate for it doesn't correlate in any way to their experience of family life. Some of the things expressed will strike them as being wrong, or a sad reflection

on the weaknesses of the authors. In one respect we envy their lack of experiential understanding, however, we are writing to set out things as they are – and not as we would wish them to be. Moreover, the motivation for this contribution is a profound empathy with all those parents who, although conscious of deficiencies, sought to fulfil the injunction that forms the title of this article.

From earliest days you taught your children from the word of God, so that, like Timothy, it can be said of them 'that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation', 2 Tim. 3. 15. Attendance at assembly meetings was an accepted part of the weekly lifestyle, and the things of God lay at the very heart of home life.

Despite these noble aspirations you have seen your children turn away from all that you hold dear. Maybe some of them have never made a profession of salvation, whilst others who did so have either renounced it or have drifted away. Principles that regulated your home have not been adhered to by your family and today they, like Demas before them, love this present world. Their affections are not set on things above, former enthusiasm for Christ has dissipated, and carnality has replaced spirituality.

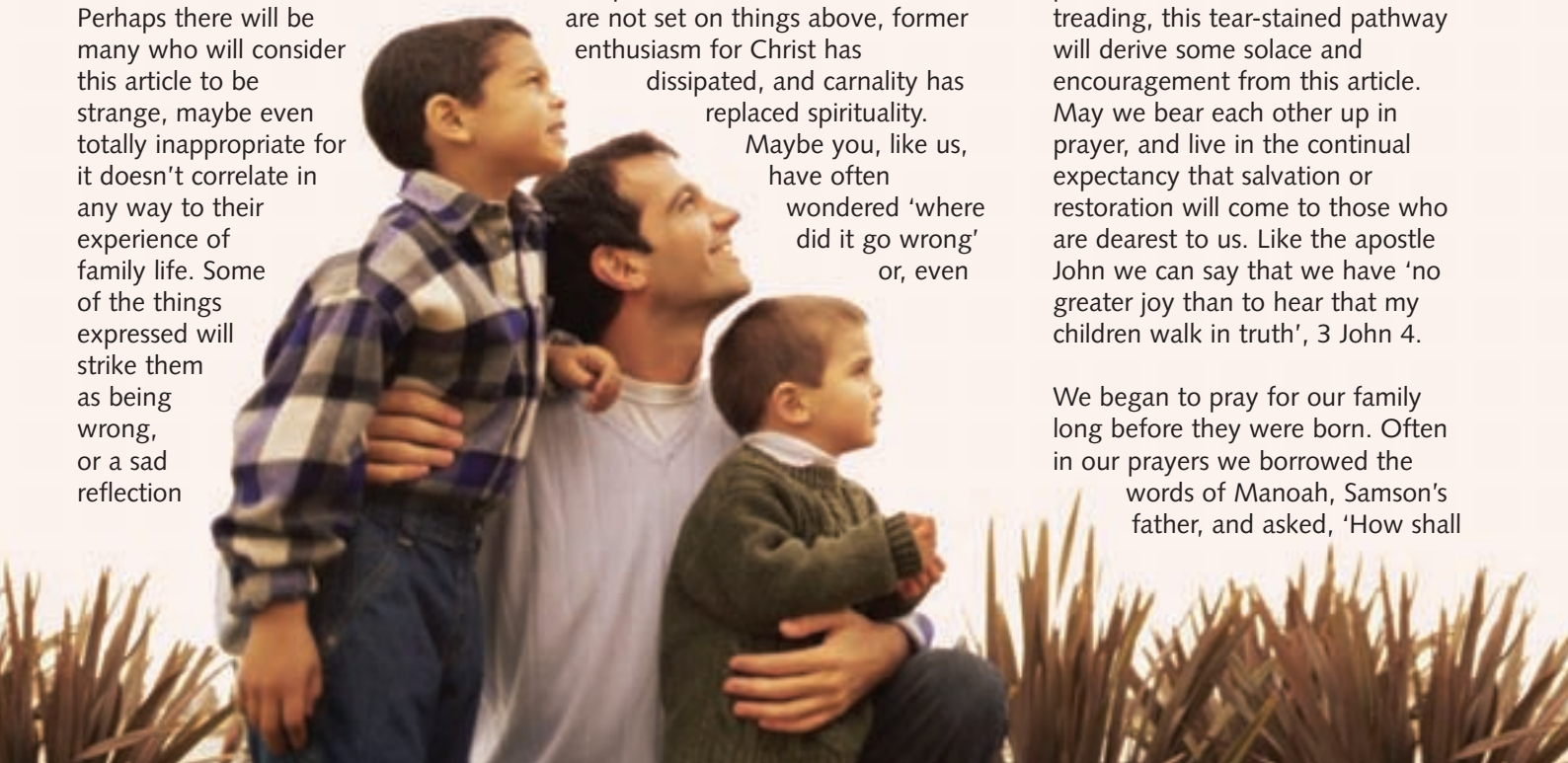
Maybe you, like us, have often wondered 'where did it go wrong' or, even

more painfully, 'where did **we** go wrong'.

To compound your sense of frustration, and sadness, there are a couple of matters that you struggle to understand, even though you cannot articulate those frustrations for fear of being considered unspiritual or bitter. Firstly, although you did your best to train up your children in the way they should go – they have departed from it! Not for one moment would you question the validity of the word of God; however, in some of your 'down times', this verse has really challenged your faith. You attempted to fulfil the exhortation as best as you could, but the promise that follows it hasn't been fulfilled. Secondly, why is it that some parents, whose commitment to the spiritual welfare of their family appeared to be less than yours, have seen all their children saved, baptized, and in fellowship? This strikes you as being unfair and, although you would be too embarrassed to admit it, there have been times when you almost wish they had had a taste of your medicine.

Our deep longing is that those parents who have trodden, or are treading, this tear-stained pathway will derive some solace and encouragement from this article. May we bear each other up in prayer, and live in the continual expectancy that salvation or restoration will come to those who are dearest to us. Like the apostle John we can say that we have 'no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth', 3 John 4.

We began to pray for our family long before they were born. Often in our prayers we borrowed the words of Manoah, Samson's father, and asked, 'How shall





the way he should go; and . . .

we order the child, and how shall we do unto him?' Judg. 13. 12. Within weeks of being born each child was taken to the Breaking of Bread meeting and Sunday School, and we also took them to the first half of conferences in the area. When they were old enough to keep awake they started to attend the weekly gospel service. The family reading and prayer time was a daily practice in the home and, once each one learned to read, they commenced a children's Bible study.

Although our greatest longing was to see the family saved and develop spiritually, one thing we considered important was to play with our children. A sure way of putting any child off the things of God would have been an unbalanced emphasis on Bible reading and meeting attendance. These things must have their rightful place, but physical development, social interaction and fun are also vital elements of human development. We didn't want our offspring behaving as patriarchs when they were just kids, and so they had plenty of opportunity to play with us and their friends.

We had the inestimable joy of seeing each one make a profession of salvation and show interest in the scriptures. They took it in turns to say grace at meals and joined in the family prayers enthusiastically. Whilst none was in fellowship it was never a problem for them to attend the meetings, even though this made them very different to their peers. Things continued in this pattern until mid to late teenage years, and then change came. Their personal Bible study petered out and, eventually, we also decided to stop the family reading time. This decision may appear strange to many, and some may feel at liberty to point a finger of condemnation at us. However, we considered that to insist on maintaining something for which

they had no desire would have been irksome to them and counterproductive.

At differing times they stopped coming to the meetings and, with the world having set out its stall before them, they responded to it. Those who were our greatest joys and who we loved the most were also, in one aspect, our deepest sadness. Just as the father in Luke chapter 15 watched the 'prodigal' go away, we too looked on and watched as each, in varying degrees, put Christian things at the margins of their lives. Thankfully, none of them ever recanted on their profession but were, and remain, convinced of the validity of their salvation.

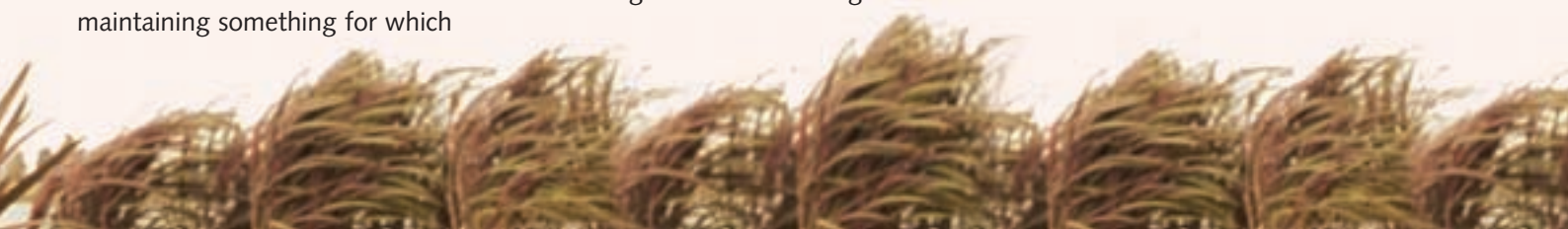
We would be less than honest if we failed to admit that on more than one occasion the temptation to jettison concerns for their restoration have been present. Maybe they have done something that has caused us real disappointment, perhaps something that has been so contrary to what they know we respect, that it has provoked anger within us. At times like that it's easy to react in a fleshly manner and just give up on them.

Maybe one day we shall give account as to how we nurtured our family, and then we shall realize what mistakes we made. Not for one moment would we lay claim to being model parents, but we did try to do what we felt was right at the time. With the benefit of hindsight there are things we regret. If it were possible to rewind the clock and to know then what we know now some things would have been done differently, and others avoided altogether. However, it is unprofitable and debilitating to wallow in this line of thought for we can't go back and start again.

One issue that sustains us when we feel low, and keeps us constant in our prayers for the family, is the incessant hope that 'ere long they will return to the Lord and put Him at the centre of their lives. Over many hundreds of years Israel proved that where repentance is displayed, God is ever prepared to restore those who have gone astray. Proverbs chapter 22 verse 6 incorporates both ends of the spectrum of life, the formative years, 'train up a child', and the mature years, 'when he is old, he will not depart from it'. In our case the formative years are over, now we longingly hope that the time of restoration is near.

Because we love the family our greatest desire is their happiness and blessing and, as would be true of any normal parents, we derive immense pleasure when we see them doing well in any facet of life. However, we also know that their greatest blessing and highest achievement cannot be derived from financial security, academic attainment, or career progression. The late Jack Hunter often used to quote, 'Only one life twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last'. How much they will have lost if they over-accomplish on earth, only to be bereft at the judgement seat of Christ.

Our minds go back over the years and recall those pleasant days of yore when, as a family unit, we engaged in, and derived much pleasure from, the things of the Lord. Obviously times change, the children have grown up and now have homes of their own. However, we cling on to the hope that one day they will reflect, repent, and return to the Saviour that loved them far more than we ever could.





Disunity was a problem in the Philippian church, affecting even veteran servants in the fellowship, Phil. 4. 2-3. The epistle's second chapter uses the lives of four men as examples of the proper attitude for God's people – Christ, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus. As 'God manifest in the flesh', 1 Tim. 3. 16, the first is different from the others; He is the supreme example of the selfless mind which puts others first, at its own unparalleled expense. By an incomparable act of humility, the incarnate Son of God blessed more people and glorified God the Father in a way that will never be surpassed.

'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus', Phil. 2. 5, begins the exhortation. Some translations idiomatically render the word 'mind' as 'attitude'. This takes the discussion into the realm of Christian thinking and the actions that stem from it. When Paul urged them to 'be likeminded', v. 2, and 'in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves', what exactly did that look like? Is the selfless mind practical and attainable in the real world? Christ's example assures one that it is possible to have such a mind; furthermore, He demonstrates unselfish behaviour which impoverishes Himself so that He may spiritually enrich others.

In the Beginning was the Word

An appreciation of the Lord's humble actions can be gained only by considering His condescension in leaving heaven's glory for earth's progressive abasements. Verse 6 describes the preincarnate Son as 'being in the form of God'. W. E. VINE points out the unique nature of the verb in this phrase, saying, 'The verb *huparch* conveys much more than the simple verb "to be". Used, as here, in the present participle (*huparch n*), it points to the existence of a person previous to what is stated of him'.¹ Another scholar adds: 'The participle *hyparchon* ("being" NIV, in the sense of "existing") is in the present tense and states Christ's continuing condition. To say that he was existing in the essential metaphysical form of God is tantamount to saying that he

Philippians: The Joy and Suffering

Chapter 2 verses 5-8: The Humble Mind to Emulate

possessed the nature of God'.² A third authority affirms, 'When Paul says that Christ Jesus *was in the form of God*, that is, in full possession of the divine nature, he underlines the fact by using, not the simple verb 'to be', but a stronger verb which in its characteristic usage has the force 'to be really and truly', 'to be characteristically', even 'to be by nature'. In a passage like the present one, where it is plain that every word has been weighed and measured, the full meaning of the verb can be assumed: he was really and truly, in his own personal and essential nature, God'.³ Thus, Jesus' deity is maintained from the opening phrase of this section.

And the Word was with God

The next two phrases consider what the Lord Jesus did and did not give up in His incarnation, 'thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation', v. 6. The first part is difficult to translate, but many Greek experts believe that it conveys the idea of holding on to one's personal advantages. MACLEOD renders it in keeping with this thought, 'He did not regard His divine prerogatives as something to use for His own advantage'.⁴ As applied to Christ it seems to refer to His positional rights and privileges in heaven. He shared in the same glory as the other persons of the Trinity, and He enjoyed uninterrupted fellowship with the Father, John 1. 1. Along with the praises of all the angelic hosts, the Seraphim's cry, 'Holy, holy, holy' resounded in His ears, Isa. 6. 3. He refused to remain in this exalted position; instead, He exchanged heaven for earth, glory for humiliation, and life for death. In heaven, He was invulnerable to pain, weakness, or attack. On earth, He was exposed to the venom of men's unremitting hatred against God and all that is holy.

The second phrase literally means 'to empty'. Of what did He empty Himself some ask? The rest of the

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context of the passage – as well as many other parts of the New Testament – show that this is the wrong question. Some liberal theologians use this term to avow that the Son emptied Himself of His deity – or at least of certain attributes like omniscience and omnipotence. Philosophically, this view is absurd and doctrinally it is heretical. What is more, it does not agree with the clear teaching of the passage or the rest of scripture.

A Magnificent Display of Humility

It is impossible for one to empty oneself of essential being without ceasing to exist. As R. C. H. LENSKI notes, 'To withdraw even one attribute from God is to destroy God'.⁵ The 'emptying' describes a voluntary humiliation which leads the Lord to divest Himself of position, rather than any doing of the impossible by giving up attributes. As the nineteenth-century Greek scholar J. B. LIGHTFOOT described it, '[He] stripped Himself of the insignia of majesty'.⁶ Another points out, 'Whatever He was before entrance into human existence, by His "self-emptying" He becomes the perfect bond-servant of Jehovah, who does nothing and speaks nothing from Himself, but speaks only what the Father "commands," and does "always the things that are pleasing to him"'.⁷

Verses 7-8 detail the ways in which God the Son takes the lower position ('made himself of no reputation' in the KJV's rendering). First, He 'took upon him the form of a servant', v. 7. The word 'form' is the same as was used in verse 6 to describe the Lord's deity. Its usage tells one that He did not merely pretend to be a servant, He actually became one. His own words put it best, 'For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many', Mark 10. 45. He also said, 'I am among you as he that serveth', Luke 22. 27.



ring of the Furtherance of the Gospel Part Six

God Manifested in the Flesh

The next group of phrases assert Christ's perfect humanity, saying that He 'was made in the likeness of men' and 'being found in fashion as a man', vv. 7-8. The language is reminiscent of Romans chapter 8 verse 3. 'Likeness' indicates that His manhood is different from other humans. To borrow an expression from Hebrews chapter 4 verse 15 JND, it is 'sin apart'. Yet, His humanity is genuine – contrary to the Gnostic-Docetic error that asserts He only seemed to be a man. 'Fashion' disproves this theory, for as W. E. VINE says, '[It] . . . signifies what He was in the eyes of men, "the entire outwardly perceptible mode and shape of His existence, just as the preceding words *morphe*, "form," and *homoïoma*, "likeness," describe what He was in Himself as Man" (Gifford on *The Incarnation*, p. 44). "Men saw in Christ a human form, bearing, language, action, mode of life . . . in general the state and relations of a human being, so that in the entire mode of His appearance He made Himself known and was

recognized as a man" (MEYER)'.⁸

Thus, with economy of expression, Paul says that Christ was a real, perfect man. His humility leads the Son of God to permanently take on human form, 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us', John 1. 14 NKJV.

A Demonstration of Perfect Obedience

By its position in the Greek sentence the word 'himself' in verse 8 is emphasized. The Lord Jesus' descent from glory to the sufferings of the cross is entirely voluntary. His allegiance to the Father's will leads Him to obey 'unto the point of death', v. 8 NKJV. Because His Father desires it, He goes to the horror of the cross. The scornful treatment of sinful men and the opposition of the demonic world do not hinder Him from becoming the propitiation for the sins of the world, 1 John 2. 2.

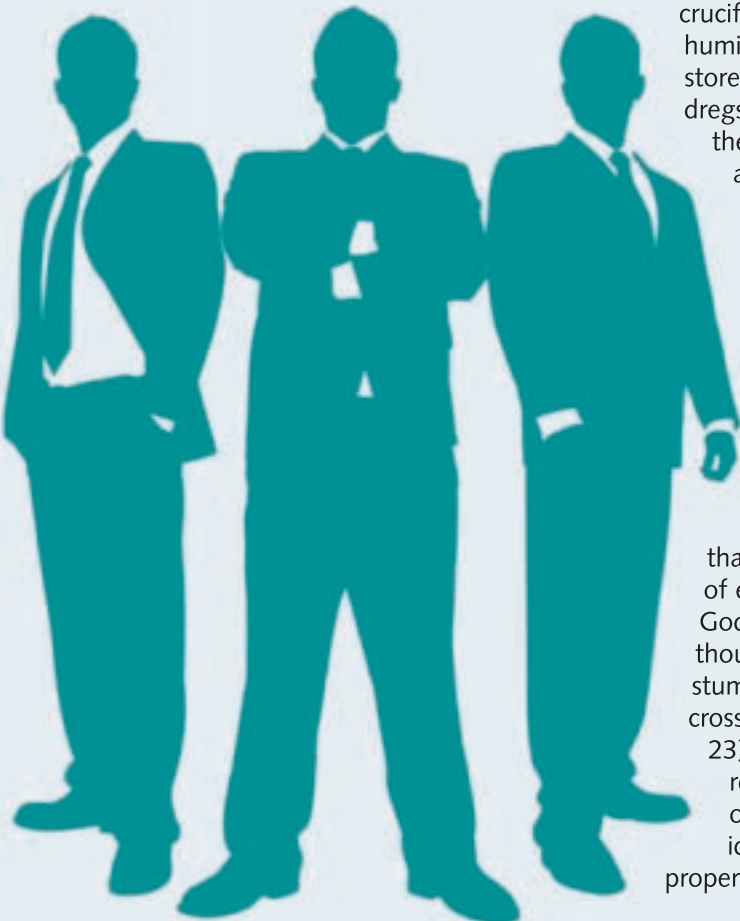
A proper understanding of Christ's gracious work requires a survey of ancient opinions on His manner of death. To the Romans, crucifixion was an odious, humiliating process, kept in store for society's vilest dregs. The Jewish view of the cross was just as bad as the Graeco-Roman estimation of this shameful gibbet. Deuteronomy chapter 21 verse 23 affirms, 'He who is hanged is accursed of God' NKJV. As MARTIN points out, '[it] meant that the victim was outside the pale of Israel, and that he was under a ban of excommunication from God's covenant. It was this thought which proved the stumbling-block of the cross to the Jew (1 Cor. 1. 23)'.⁹ Nevertheless, Christ readily endured this for others, providing the ideal example of the proper mind for His saints.

In verses 9-11 Paul reveals that the Lord's unparalleled abasement results in the greatest exaltation that the universe will ever see. Because He went so low the Father places Him in the highest place, where the entire angelic and human creation will one day confess His Lordship to the Father's own glory, vv. 9-11. To abase one's self for others leads to divine blessing and exaltation. Considering what Christ suffered for His people, how can they not emulate His unselfish behaviour? His death demands selflessness on the part of the redeemed. By the resources He provides, vv. 1-4, they can have the Lord's lowly mind.

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- 7 ALVA J. MCCLAIN, 'The Doctrine of the Kenosis in Philippians 2:5-8', *Master's Seminary Journal* 9:1 (Spring 1998), pp. 93-94.
- 8 W. E. VINE, MERRILL F. UNGER AND WILLIAM WHITE, 'fashion' (*schema*), *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1996; electronic edition [Logos]).
- 9 RALPH P. MARTIN, *Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Vol. 11, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987, brackets mine.

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Part A: The Church's Character

Character is a property that defines the apparent nature of something. Looking at the character of Christ's church as revealed in the New Testament, we notice three main characteristics: holiness, truth, and love – all of which reflect the character of Jesus Christ our Lord.¹

Holiness

Much of today's church seems to put an emphasis not on holiness, but on happiness. As long as all are happy, all is well. Yet, 'holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever', Ps. 93. 5. The Old Testament tabernacle had holy places, not happy places. Holiness conveys separation from what God determines unclean and association with what He determines clean.

In Leviticus chapter 11, we see God's call to holiness for Israel defined on a physical level. This holiness was conveyed by not eating certain meats. The foods God declared clean or unclean were the sole criteria, not personal preference. God was teaching them that His assessment of right and wrong is the way to live life, vv. 44-47.

In the New Testament, the church is told that, 'God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness', 1 Thess. 4. 7. We are to 'cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God', 2 Cor. 7. 1. There is not only filthiness of the flesh (sinful behaviour) but filthiness of the spirit (religious evil). In an unholy world the church is to be characterized by being separated from all types of sin and spiritual error as it bears witness to Christ alone.

Truth

Truth is a fact that is accurate and absolute, apart from feelings or experiences. The church finds itself living in a world governed by the father of lies. The world cries for toleration. The church, however, is called the pillar of truth.

While the Pilates of this world are ignorant of what truth is, the church has come to know the truth. This is because our Saviour is the very source of truth, the holy scriptures

THE LOCAL CHURCH – ITS CHA

call His words the 'the word of truth', 2 Tim. 2. 15.

Therefore, in a world of darkness, deceit, and demons, the true church, by proclamation of His word alone is the one mainstay of saving and enlightening truth.

Love

In a world of bitterness, broken marriages, abortion, crime, betrayal, murders, cheating, and war, loving one another will be a stark contrast. Believers are taught to forbear and forgive rather than to fight and fret. Above all things, they are to 'put on charity' (love) which comes by setting our affections on Christ, Col. 3. 2, 8, 13, 14.

However, love 'thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth', 1 Cor. 13. 5, 6. God's truth and holiness are not required to sacrifice themselves on the altar of love. In the full revelation of Jesus Christ all three characteristics are meant to complement rather than contradict each other.

God does not leave these characteristics uncontrolled. A river can be vital to a city's life. Yet, a river without its two river banks to contain it can flood and bring destruction. The church's love is to be between two river banks, 'that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge [an aspect of truth] and in all judgment [discerning right and wrong, an aspect of holiness]', Phil. 1. 9.

In order to help maintain a balance in these characteristics, the church is given a constitution to govern it.

Part B: The Church's Constitution

A constitution is comprised of the laws defining the principles of government for people to function in an orderly way. Order balances character qualities. Correct order in the church will give true testimony to the person and gospel of Christ.

What is the authority that is to govern

the worship and service of the Christian church? Is it culture, secular government, majority opinion (the people's voice), inner hunches, common sense, a mystical spirit, or a professional 'ordained' man?

The constitution of the Christian church is Christ; 'Jesus Christ is Lord', Phil. 2. 11. Christ is the Head of the church. The New Testament church is given 'the commandments of the Lord', 1 Cor. 14. 37. The apostles' teaching is also the doctrine of Christ, for it was given to them from Christ. The early church 'continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine', not the apostle's experiences.² 'That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour', 2 Pet. 3. 2.³

Let us consider four areas the Lord has taught from His constitution. These written commandments and instructions will help the church maintain love, truth, and holiness as a testimony unto the Lord Jesus Christ in a recognizable and orderly way that pleases God. These are to be maintained and held fast as God-given principles until He comes, 2 Thess. 2. 14-15.

Commandments concerning a Governing Body (to maintain love, truth and holiness)

New Testament scripture gives teaching concerning the government of local churches. We read of 'elders in every church', Acts 14. 23. These elders are not made by man's schools but God's Spirit. Biblical elders have certain moral and spiritual qualifications. Elders function as overseers of the flock as they shepherd the sheep, 20. 28. They maintain truth by being on the lookout for error that corrupts, vv. 29, 30. They are more discerning than decision-making, not marketing managers developing new strategies to promote growth, like a business. Elders oversee that the flock is following the Chief Shepherd by being fed His word.

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CHARACTER AND CONSTITUTION

They also will be involved in the correcting and disciplining of sin in the church, thus maintaining holiness, 1 Cor. 5. 4; 2 Thess. 3. 14. They might also be involved in addressing the needs of poor Christians, thus maintaining love, Acts 11. 26-30.

Elders and deacons are the only official works that scripture knows of for local churches. According to its constitution, there is no higher human authority between the Lord and His church.

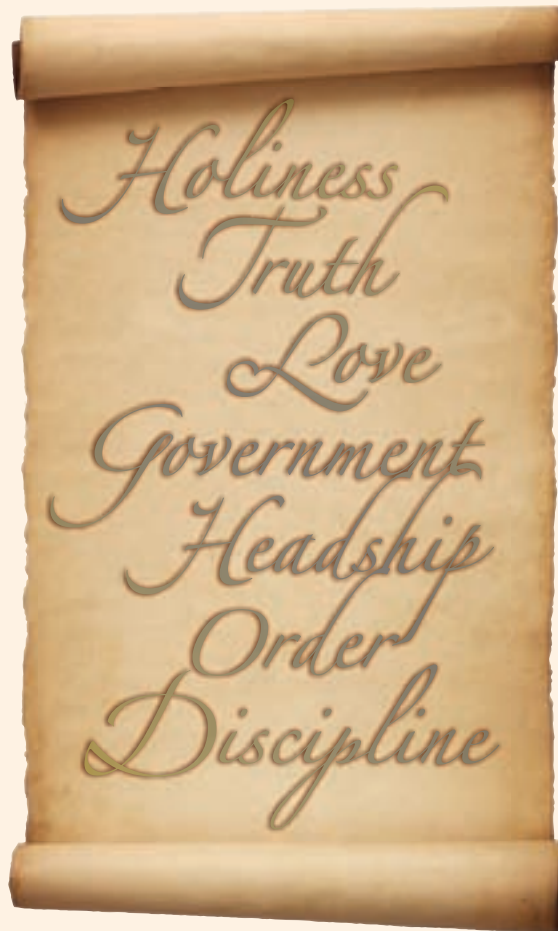
Commandments concerning Headship

(to maintain love with order)

The apostles' doctrine also gives the Lord Jesus' instruction concerning the different roles of men and women. 'But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God', 1 Cor. 11. 3. This is to be demonstrated in a visible way in His church. The headship of God is manifested through the head covering for the woman, the uncovered head for the man, the oral participation of the man, and the silence of the woman when the church is gathered. 'Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak . . . for it is a shame for women to speak in the church . . . if any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord', 14. 34, 35, 37. It is hard to picture how these commandments could be communicated with any greater clarity.

However, in this constitutional order, headship is not the same as kingship. A king gives orders to his servants for his personal pleasure. A head makes decisions for the welfare of its body. The woman and wife are taught to submit but one does not have to throw away the mind to submit. Submission means to 'stay under' and, thus, yield to the authority over you. God honours submission for, amazingly enough, through submission we have

the very gospel of Christ Jesus. Women are given the incredible privilege of portraying the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 3. 5-7, Phil. 2. 6-8.



This balance of give and take between man and woman is meant to complement each other and, when correctly employed, will promote respect with love, 'So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself', Eph. 5. 28.

Commandments concerning Order of a Church Meeting

(to maintain truth)

The Lord's teaching to His church when gathering together as an assembly-congregation envisages a plurality of men being involved, with various gifts and liberties to speak in prayer, singing, teaching, etc., 1 Cor. 14. 23-40. Others are to judge and have the liberty to participate with what God has given them. This provides accountability as a check and balance system, and the plurality of participation helps arrest error from just one dynamic man. This maintains truth.

Commandments concerning Matters of Discipline

(to maintain holiness)

Though God is love He is also holy and righteous. While He forgives the due judgement of sin through the blood of Christ, there can be consequences. For example, if a Christian gets in a fight and loses his arm, as a believer he can be forgiven from judgement but the consequence of his armless state remains. Similarly, whilst a believer can be forgiven the consequences of his or her sin are not always easily erased. The church is to excommunicate sinning believers. This is to maintain the holiness of the church so such behaviour will not spread casually, 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3. 14; 1 Tim. 5. 20.

Justification for these types of actions is not legalism, but love. 'If ye love me keep my commandments', John 14. 15. These are some of the commands that are in the church's constitution (the scriptures) that authorizes it to function in such a manner in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Until He comes again, may we hold fast these truths for His name and glory.

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- 1 That is: 'for the temple of God is **holy**, which temple ye are', 1 Cor. 3. 17; 'the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the **truth**', 1 Tim. 3. 15; 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have **love** one to another', John 13. 35.
- 2 See also Jude verse 17, 'But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ'.
- 3 What was heard from Christ's apostles was eventually written by them in letters to various Christians and churches. These *scriptures* or *epistles* (written letters of instruction) are what the church has today, 2 Pet. 3. 16; 2 Thess. 2. 15. Christ is not on earth now but His word is – written in a book, Rev. 1. 11. Therefore, Paul the apostle could say, 'The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord', 1 Cor. 14. 37. And Peter said, 'And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you', 2 Pet. 3. 15.

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GOD'S PLEASURE IN HIS SON

'This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him', Matt. 17. 5; 2 Pet. 1. 17.

'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief, when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand', Isa. 53. 10.

The Father's pronouncement of His pleasure in His Son is a demonstration of unspeakable glory, 'his face shone as the sun . . . and his raiment was white and glistering'. It caused the watching disciples to fall on their faces. It was not that humans should fall before such glory; it was God, the Father, taking pleasure in the radiance of His Son. He reveals Him in blinding light and says, 'This is my pleasure'.

In measure, as humans, we can understand this revealing of God in His Son, in a scene of resplendent glory. What we find quite beyond us is an explanation of the prophet Isaiah's word, 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him'! Where do we start in an attempt to interpret the Lord's heart?

Seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, we were given the answer to the great question of how sinful humanity can be reconciled to a holy and righteous God. It was by the bruising and putting to death of His Son. And the staggering thing is that God took pleasure in it! He was not slain by man in an uncontrollable frenzy, He was, as the apostle Peter states, 'delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God', Acts 2. 23.

We might ask, why did God do this? He did it to accomplish the task that would bring Him the ultimate pleasure! That we, sinners, might be reconciled to Him! This is the ultimate glory

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spoken of by the Lord Jesus, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am that they may behold my glory', John 17. 24. Why could our sin not be ignored and a merciful God overlook it? Because God loves the honour of His Name! He cannot act as though sin doesn't matter. So heinous in the sight of God is man's sin and human guilt that it demanded the death of the Son of God incarnate. What an awesome thought! In Proverbs, we read, 'He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, both of them alike

defeated and ensure that God's righteous character would not be tarnished. God would justify sinners and retain His glory because He, in the person of His Son, became answerable for our iniquity. This is the gospel, God's good news! And Paul tells us that the sacrifice of Christ was a fragrant aroma to God, Eph. 5. 2.

Our text goes on to say: 'He shall see his seed and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand'. Here was an additional way that God would derive pleasure. Despite being 'cut off out of

the land of the living', unmarried, and without offspring, he would 'see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied'. In other words, as the writer to the Hebrews puts it, 'For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings', Heb. 2. 10, and again, 'Behold I and the children which God hath given me', v. 13.

And now, finally, we need to ask, 'Is this justification automatic?'

We find our answer: 'by faith of Jesus Christ unto all . . . them that believe', Rom. 3. 22. The apostle goes on to say that there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile 'for all have sinned and come short (missed the mark) of the glory of God'. There we have it again, 'the glory of God'. This is the beginning and end of the matter. It is this that we are declaring when we preach the gospel. In its proclamation, let us carefully and prayerfully interpret the word, remembering that God's honour and glory is at stake.

DREW CRAIG has for the last 35 years been in the assembly in Brooklands, Dundonald, Belfast, which commenced as an outreach from the Gospel Hall in Dundonald. The Lord has blessed the work with many conversions and baptisms over the years and during this time Drew has been occupied with preaching, teaching and shepherding in the assembly.



are an abomination to the Lord.', 17. 15 NKJV. In our day, we are enraged when guilty men go free, yet at the heart of the Christian gospel is the doctrine that God justifies the ungodly, and acquits the guilty! But how can He do that and remain righteous? The answer is, 'justified, freely, by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus', Rom. 3. 24. Everything the Lord Jesus suffered He suffered for God's pleasure and glory. He speaks with authority, 'I do always those things that please him', the Father, John 8. 29. He also said, referring to His death, 'Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him', 13. 31. All the pain, the shame, the humiliation, the dishonour, would bring glory to His Father. He was determined that, through suffering and death, Satan and all hosts would be

THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SOME OF OUR LORD'S PARABLES

By **MALCOLM HORLOCK** Cardiff, Wales

(UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, ALL QUOTATIONS OF SCRIPTURE ARE FROM THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION)

9

The Parable of the Pounds

Luke 19. 11-27. Part 2.

INTRODUCTION

In Part 1 of our study of the so-called Parable of the Pounds, we considered the context and historical background of the parable, we noted several points of comparison and contrast between the parable and that of the Talents, and we provided an exposition of verses 11 to 15 of Luke chapter 19.

In the current article, we shall continue the exposition at verse 16. In so doing we will consider, in particular: (i) what happens to the three servants singled out for mention by our Lord; (ii) the significance of the minas (in particular the significance of the transfer of one of the original minas from one servant to another); and (iii) the meaning of the tantalizing words which Jesus put into the mouth of the nobleman, 'From him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him'.

EXPOSITION

Verse 16. Although the nobleman had entrusted a mina to each of *ten* servants, the Lord Jesus draws attention to only *three* of these¹ as examples of the various ways in which the minas were used – or not used!

The first two had performed extremely well. They had utilized their opportunities to increase the sums committed to them ten-fold and five-fold respectively, thereby proving themselves worthy of higher responsibilities.

The first servant was able to point to 1000% profit 'earned' ('earned in addition'²) from his capital sum of one mina. Although such a profit may seem extremely large to us, it 'was quite possible under ancient conditions with enormous interest and commission rates'.³

It is perhaps worthy of note that neither the first nor the second servant made any great claim for himself, but attributed the kudos for the profit gained to the mina itself. 'Notice he did not say, I have been very diligent and persistent, and managed to make thy pound into ten. The pound did it itself'.⁴

This stands in contrast to the first two servants in the Parable of the Talents, who could both, in all honesty, claim, 'I have gained five/two more talents'.⁵ To some extent, the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verse 10 bring together these two aspects of all true service for God, 'by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but *I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me*'. For, although we each have our responsibility and our part to play, ultimately God must have the glory of all our faithful service. We ought always to pray with the psalmist, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to your name give glory'.⁶

Verse 17. The nobleman's, 'Well done ('excellent'), good servant' implies his commendation of the servant's *faithfulness*, which is added explicitly in our Lord's parable of the Talents.⁷

The *profit* obtained by the servant was certainly very impressive, but his *reward* – authority over ten *cities* in the nobleman's kingdom⁸ – was even more staggering, and out of all proportion even to what he had achieved with the relatively insignificant sum which had been entrusted to him.

And yet, although in one sense (that of its scale) the reward was entirely *disproportional* to the service rendered, in another sense (that of its number) it was directly *proportional* to what this service had achieved. For the extent of the responsibility bestowed as a reward was directly proportional to the servant's proven faithfulness and industry.

The application to the believer is obvious. 'The parable clearly teaches that when the Lord returns to reign, His people shall reign with Him', at which time, 'the faithful will be rewarded . . . and the reward will be in terms of further responsibility and increased work . . . of joining with Messiah in His unimaginably vast new enterprises'.⁹

That is, 'whosoever has faithfully and diligently made the most of the opportunities given by Him to serve His cause'¹⁰ in this present life will be given opportunities to serve Him in His kingdom on a far greater and grander scale than anything which can now be imagined. As one commentator expressed it, 'The recompense, a city for a pound, just hints at the magnificent possibilities of the heaven-life, just suggests the splendour of its rewards'.¹¹

It is clear from this parable that the degree of responsibility to be allocated to each believer at the Judgement Seat of Christ will depend on his or her faithful use of the resources committed to his or her trust during the period of the Lord's absence. Those who have served Him well will be granted 'an abundant entrance' into His everlasting kingdom.¹²

Verses 18-19. A second servant had achieved half as much with his mina as had the first servant with his, and was rewarded proportionately. And the Lord we serve takes note in the present how well we serve Him, and will, 'in that day', take full account of this and will bestow His rewards accordingly.

'He whom we serve notices both the quantity and the quality of what is done for Him . . . Thus Romans 16. 12 tells us of Tryphena and Tryphosa, who laboured in the Lord, and of the beloved Persis, who laboured "much" in the Lord. In like manner, Nehemiah 3 tells us of many who helped in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, but distinguishes some as working "earnestly". The "much" and the "earnestly" should be pondered by all who would be well-pleasing to the absent Christ'.¹³

It is no doubt for this reason that the second servant did not receive the special commendation, 'Well done, good servant', which the servant received who had performed twice as well.¹⁴

Verse 20. But another servant (of a different sort¹⁵) had hidden his mina for the duration of his master's absence. This servant had put away the mina which he had been given 'in a handkerchief' ('a napkin'). To some extent, he would have been in good company in placing money there, for, at a later date, Rabbi Abba Arika 'used to bind money in his scarf, sling it on his back, and place himself at the disposal of the poor. He cast his eye, however, sideways [as a precaution] against rogues'.¹⁶

But Rabbi Abba was not typical. 'According to rabbinical law, burying was regarded as the best security against theft. Anyone who buried a pledge or a deposit immediately upon receipt of it was free from liability. On the other hand, if anyone tied up entrusted money in a cloth, they were responsible for any loss incurred as a result of their inadequate care of the entrusted property'.¹⁵



Our Lord's immediate audience would likely have understood Him to say, therefore, that this servant failed to exercise even the most elementary precautions with respect to the property entrusted to him.

The 'napkin' (Greek σουδάριον; transliterated 'soudarion') was probably either a neck cloth used to protect the back of the head from the sun or a piece of cloth used to wipe perspiration off the face and neck.¹⁸ R. C. TRENCH suggests that, 'The soudarion, which, not exerting himself, this lazy servant does not need for its proper use ('in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread', Gen. 3. 19), he uses for the wrapping up of his pound. That he had it disengaged, and free to be turned to his purpose, was itself a witness against him'.¹⁹

In that our Lord develops the case of this, the third, servant in far greater detail than the case of the other servants, it is clear that His parable is largely directed against the faults of which he is a notable representative.

Verse 21. The reason which the servant gave for having hoarded the sum entrusted to him was that he 'feared' his master, who, he claimed, was notoriously hard on his servants. By implying that, for this reason, he had been reluctant to take any risks with his master's property,²⁰ he virtually made his own laziness into a virtue and attempted to shift the blame for his inactivity onto his master.

And so, in order to excuse his indifference to the clear instruction of his master, the third servant did not hesitate to slander the nobleman's character. For slander it he most certainly did. The Greek word translated 'austere'²¹ means harsh and stern. To describe a man as such was to say that he was 'a man who expects to get blood out of a stone'.²²

The servant went on to charge his master with being the kind of man who took up what he did not lay down, and reaped what he did not sow (literal translation). It is claimed that 'the metaphor is drawn from banking, and is used here to describe a person who seeks a disproportionately high return from his investments'.²³ If this is so, what irony, that the man who accuses his master of expecting 'a disproportionately high return from his investments' has the cheek to offer him none!

Verse 22. We have to recognize, of course, that (i) the servant had not wasted his master's goods as had the unjust steward,²⁴ that (ii) the servant had not wasted his own goods 'in riotous living' as had the prodigal,²⁵ and that (iii) the servant had not run up a staggering debt of 10,000 talents as had the unforgiving servant.²⁶ And yet the servant is most properly described as 'wicked' because he had not done as he had been commanded by his master!²⁷ For the man had not been left free to decide for himself what he would do with that which was his master's.

But the nobleman was too shrewd for his servant and quickly saw through his feeble excuse. The man had condemned himself with his own words. It has been well said that he is '*condemned by his crime, but self-condemned by his plea*'.²⁸ For, had his master's character really matched the description which the servant gave of it, fear should have spurred him into action. The truth was that the servant was not *fearful*, but *lazy*. He was not *prudent*, but *bone idle*.

I note that this servant's counterpart in the parable of the talents (the 'unprofitable servant') is cast into outer darkness amid weeping and gnashing of teeth.²⁹ But here the servant is carefully distinguished by our Lord from the 'enemies' who are later slain.³⁰ Yet the penalty he paid was serious enough . . . with its regret and loss. And though we are assured that failure to serve the Lord well will not cost the true believer *his salvation*, we know that it will cost him *his reward*!³¹

Verse 23. The expression translated 'in the bank' is literally

'upon a table', with reference to the table of the money-changer or the banker. Indeed, it seems that the origin of the English word 'bank' can be traced back to the Ancient Roman Empire, where a moneylender would set up his stall in the middle of an enclosed courtyard on a long bench called a '*bancu*'.³²

Verse 24. One of the most intriguing features of the parable lies in its emphasis on what happens to the minas after they had fulfilled their obvious purpose of establishing how many cities in the kingdom should be allocated to whom, and in particular on the transfer of one of the original minas from one servant to another. For such details have no apparent connection either with correcting the people's false expectation about the timing of the kingdom³³ or with the historical background of Archelaus' journey to Rome.

Indeed, as far as Archelaus is concerned, we have no historical evidence that he ever did, as he had promised before his departure to Rome,³⁴ reward those on his return who faithfully served him³⁵ during his absence.

The nobleman gave instructions that the single mina which had been hoarded by the third servant was now to be taken from him and handed to the servant who had gained ten by trading. Having once missed his opportunity, the servant is deprived of further opportunity in the future, and it is given to another who has proved himself willing and able to make full use of such. TRENCH comments well that 'that very gift³⁶ which the one forfeits the other obtains . . . one takes the crown which another has let go'.³⁷

That the first servant still retained the ten minas shows that the faithful servants were rewarded, not only by being given authority to rule over cities, but by being given the profit which they had made – and presumably encouraged to use it to make further profit. 'The servant does not lose that which he has gained, although it was for his master. He enjoys it. Not so with the servant who made no use of his talent; that which had been committed to him is given to the one who had gained ten'.³⁸

Verse 25. At this point we hear the seemingly ludicrous comment which the Saviour put into the mouths of those who stood near the nobleman, 'Master, he has ten minas'.³⁹ I suspect that if we had been the bystanders in our Lord's story, we might well have interjected, 'Master, he has ten *cities*', but certainly not, 'he has ten *pounds*'. For who, we may well wonder, having just received jurisdiction over ten cities would care a fig about having one mina to add to those he still held? But that is precisely the point! Because, as far as the original listeners were concerned – and as far as we, the readers, are concerned – the teaching of the parable very much centres in that very mina!

Verse 26. In the **INTRODUCTION** above, I referred to 'the tantalizing words which Jesus put into the mouth of the nobleman, "from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him"'.⁴⁰ And how are we to understand such a paradox? How can something be taken from someone who has nothing?⁴¹

I suggest the clue to our Lord's meaning lies in the arithmetic of verses 24 and 25. The servant who received ten cities is described, by both the nobleman and the bystanders, as 'having' ten minas. And yet we know that in fact he had eleven! Clearly, he still retained the original mina given to him in verse 13, because for him to have been deprived of that original mina would have been a punishment, as it certainly proved to be for the 'wicked servant' in verse 24. And to that original mina the first faithful servant had, according to verse 16, added a further ten minas, making eleven in all. I conclude therefore that verse 24 should be paraphrased, 'take the mina



from him, and give it to him who has *gained* the ten minas', and that verse 25 should be paraphrased, 'Master, he has *gained* ten minas'.

Armed with this key, the paradox of verse 26 is easily explained as meaning, 'to everyone who has *gained* will be given; and from him who has not *gained*, even that which he has will be taken away'. In other words, the nobleman is simply pointing out that funds are entrusted to a man consistent with his proven track record. If a trader or merchant entrusted with capital shows a significant profit, people will eagerly offer him further capital; but a trader who reports no profit will have taken from him the capital previously entrusted to him, because the original investor will have no further need of such a man.⁴² In other words, 'from him who has not *gained* – from him who has *made no profit* – from him will be withdrawn even that *capital* which he was originally given'.

The following suggested expansion of the nobleman's words helps clarify the point: 'To him who has added something of his own to what I entrusted to him, more of mine shall be entrusted and he shall have abundance. But from him who has added nothing of his own to what I entrusted to him, shall be taken away what I entrusted to him'.⁴³

But why we must ask does the Lord Jesus focus such attention on a mere mina? What can the mina possibly represent that is so fundamentally important? Well, clearly the mina represents something which every servant of Jesus is given to use and invest, and something which can be removed and transferred to others. I suggest that the mina stands for the opportunities – the openings for service and for doing good – which we are all given. Although the details of our opportunities differ enormously, we each have in common a week of seven days and a day of 24 hours.

By means of this parable, my Lord wants me to know that, through the proper and diligent use of my present opportunities for service and doing good in this life and world, I can secure for myself a reward which will consist in part of further, increased and enlarged, opportunities and capacity for service in His manifested kingdom. He wants me to know that in part the reward for God-given opportunities which are grasped and turned to advantage now will be further opportunities then, on a vaster and more glorious scale than I can ever dream.

But, alas for me, there is more to the parable than that. For the servant who had his mina taken from him stands as representative of all those who do nothing of eternal value with the opportunities which God graciously gives them. And, by introducing this third character into His story, the Saviour is therefore telling me that my failure to exploit and use my God-given opportunities in this present world will lead inescapably to the loss of those opportunities of service which God would otherwise have readily given me to use for Him in His kingdom. That is, by my misuse – and even by my non-use – of my present opportunities, I forfeit what otherwise would have been mine in His kingdom. And that is no laughing matter!

In the day of review, the Lord is saying, He will determine the place I will fill – He will determine the scope for service I will be given – in God's kingdom, *not* on any arbitrary basis, but on the basis of what I have done here with what I have been given. That is, my role *then* is being hammered out on the anvil of my life and service *now*.

For, make no mistake, that kingdom will be no place of idleness and ease. It will not be some form of 'heavenly holiday camp'. From the very beginning, God made man to work. And, as I understand scripture, the rewards to be secured at the Judgement Seat of Christ will consist, not only

of *crowns*,⁴⁴ *cities*⁴⁵ and *commendation*,⁴⁶ but also in a wider sphere of activity – in increased and enlarged opportunities of serving Him. And, perhaps, the burning question which faces me today is, 'Do I want to be the best that I can be for Him in His future manifested kingdom?' 'If so, then', the Lord says to me through His parable, 'take care how you live in the present. For it is your energetic use of the opportunities which I give you now that will prepare and fit you for greater things in my kingdom. But if you don't make use of your opportunities *now*, you will not be given them *then*. Use them *here* or lose them *there*!'

In an earlier quotation, I alluded to our Lord's admonition to the church at Philadelphia to 'hold fast what you have, that no one may take your *crown*'.⁴⁷ Let us determine to so live here and now that no one is going to take our *mina* in that day!

In both of his letters to churches in Asia, the apostle Paul instructed the saints there that they should be 'redeeming the time'.⁴⁸ The word translated 'redeeming' used by Paul on those occasions is not the word normally used to express the idea of redemption. It is a commercial term meaning 'to buy up, to purchase completely' and comes from the background of the market place. Paul's word picture is clear: 'as prudent merchants, tirelessly buy up and use for yourselves all available opportunities of doing good and of serving God'. Such exhortations connect well with our parable, which is also largely set against a commercial background.

Verse 27. The parable ends on a sombre note. 'Bring here', the nobleman says, 'those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay'⁴⁹ them before me'. Such violent revenge is not directly ascribed to Archelaus but it would certainly have been consistent with his known character and actions.⁵⁰

Although in their interpretation these words doubtless received a partial fulfilment in the Roman-Jewish war of AD 66-70 when Jerusalem was destroyed and hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed,⁵¹ I suspect they will receive their full and final accomplishment at our Lord's second advent. Then God will deal with Israel, who have consistently rejected the Messiah during the period of His absence, in judgement, before He deals with the nation in grace.⁵² 'When He returns in glory, the perverse nation is judged before His eyes. The avowed enemies of Christ, they receive the reward of their rebellion'.⁵³

CONCLUSION

Although both (i) the hatred and antagonism and (ii) the fate of the nobleman's 'citizens' feature in the story, our Lord's parable centres rather in how he determined the roles and positions of responsibility of his servants in his kingdom, which was, as we have seen, solely on the basis of the degree of industry and faithfulness which each showed during his absence.

Immediately following His telling the parable, the Lord Jesus 'went on ahead, *going up* to Jerusalem'.⁵⁴ And from there, consequent upon His crucifixion and resurrection, He '*went up* (the same word) on high . . . far above all the heavens',⁵⁵ in His own words, 'to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return'.⁵⁶ You and I live during the interval between His going and His coming back. And the practical issue which faces us all is 'what, if anything, are we doing with *our* minas?'

I smiled when I read some time ago that, according to an official American court record, in response to the lawyer's question, 'Have you lived in this town *all* your life?', one witness answered, '*Not yet*'.⁵⁷ There is, however, a serious point there. For, at this very moment, my life is an unfinished story. It is not too late for me to exploit for His glory and for



the benefit of others those opportunities which the Lord gives me . . . yet!

For most of us, our opportunities are, in human terms, of an ordinary, mundane, and everyday kind. They are of the sort which Paul had in mind when he exhorted the Galatians, 'Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith'.⁵⁸

Footnotes

- 1 Compare Luke chapter 14 verses 18-20, where the Lord draws attention to three individuals as representative of a larger number.
- 2 W. E. VINE, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, note (1) to the article 'Gain (Noun and Verb)'.
- 3 I. HOWARD MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke in the New International Greek Testament Commentary* series, page 705.
- 4 G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, *The Parables and Metaphors of our Lord*, page 221.
- 5 Matt. 25. 20, 22.
- 6 Ps. 115. 1.
- 7 'Well done, good and faithful servant', Matt. 25. 21, 23.
- 8 It should be noted that the servant was not given ownership of the cities, but the authority to administer their affairs on behalf of his master.
- 9 D. W. GOODING, *According to Luke*, pages 300-301.
- 10 N. GELDENHUYS, *The Gospel of Luke*, page 475.
- 11 H. D. M. SPENCE, *Pulpit Commentary*.
- 12 2 Pet. 1. 3-11.
- 13 W. W. FEREDAY, *Our Lord's Parables*, under 'The Pounds'.
- 14 'Note that this servant . . . is not praised by his lord as the first one', N. GELDENHUYS, *The Gospel of Luke*, page 478.
- 15 The word 'another' translates the word 'heteros', which 'expresses a qualitative difference and denotes "another of a different sort"'. W. E. VINE, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, article 'another'. The first two servants were profitable; he was unprofitable. They were good servants; he was a 'wicked servant', Luke 19. 22.
- 16 The Babylonian Talmud, Kethuboth 67b. See http://www.halakhah.com/kethuboth/kethuboth_67.html. Rabbi Abba, also known as Rabbi Abba Arika, lived from AD 175 to 247.
- 17 JOHN M. CORBETT, Anderson University – quoting from JOACHIM JEREMIAS, *The Parables of Jesus*, page 61. See <http://johncorbett.org/files/17/54/parable%20of%20pounds%20exegesis%20luke%2019.11-27.doc>.
- 18 Compare the use of the word by Luke in Acts chapter 19 verse 12.
- 19 R. C. TRENCH, *Notes on the Parables*, page 519, footnote 3.
- 20 But see the quotation about 'inadequate care' on verse 20 above.
- 21 'Αυστηρός from which we derive our English word 'austere'.
- 22 MOULTON AND MILLIGAN, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, volume I, page 93a.
- 23 See <http://sermons.logos.com/submissions/113007-The-Test-of-Stewardship#content=/submissions/113007>.
- 24 Luke 16. 1.
- 25 Luke 15. 13 KJV.
- 26 Matt. 18. 24.
- 27 As with many others in our Lord's parables, the ground of the unfaithful servant's condemnation lay, not so much in what he had done, but in that which he had not done. Compare the priest and the Levite, Luke 10. 31-32, and those of the nations on the King's left hand, Matt. 25. 41-46.
- 28 MATTHEW HENRY.
- 29 Matt. 25. 30.
- 30 Luke 19. 27.
- 31 'If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved', 1 Cor. 3. 15.
- 32 Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commercial_bank.
- 33 Luke 19. 11.
- 34 Archelaus 'spoke kindly to the multitude . . . and promised them he would endeavour not to be behindhand with them in rewarding their alacrity in his service, after a suitable manner . . . he pretended to do all things so as to get the good-will of the multitude to him, as looking upon that good-will to be a great step towards his preservation of the government', FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XVII, Chapter VIII, Paragraph 4. He promised 'that he would make abundant requitals, not to the soldiers only, but to the people, for their

alacrity and good-will to him, when the superior lords [the Romans] should have given him a complete title to the kingdom', JOSEPHUS, *Wars of the Jews*, Book II, Chapter I, Paragraph 1.

- 35 See, for example, some who, in the absence of Archelaus, faithfully fulfilled the charge he had given them; 'After Archelaus was sailed for Rome', Sabinus, Caesar's steward for Syrian affairs, 'disposed of the castles in the manner he pleased; but those who kept them did not neglect what Archelaus had given them in command, but continued to keep all things in the manner that had been enjoined them', FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, Book XVII, Chapter IX, Paragraph 3.
- 36 Although, strictly speaking, neither the talent of Matthew chapter 25 verse 28 nor the mina of Luke chapter 19 verse 24 was a 'gift'.
- 37 R. C. TRENCH, *ibid.*, page 287. Behind his reference to 'the crown' lies our Lord's admonition to the church in Philadelphia, Rev. 3. 11.
- 38 JOHN NELSON DARBY, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, Volume III, pages 361-362.
- 39 It is possible to read verse 24 as an exclamation by our Lord's audience. If that is so, it shows just how keenly they had been following the parable, and, by implication, how effective our Lord was as a story teller. But, as I see it, the evidence points to the interjection as coming rather from the bystanders in the parable. Certainly, it is the nobleman in the story who has been speaking in verses 22 to 24, who will speak again in verse 27, and who, most likely, speaks in verse 26 – and who is therefore the most likely person addressed by the title 'Lord' (as it is literally) in verse 25. And we should note that the very same title appears as an address to the nobleman throughout the whole section; see its use in verses 16, 18 and 20.
- 40 Although we normally associate the clause 'I say to you' with an authoritative saying of the Lord Jesus, it is not always so. We find it, not only on the lips of John the Baptist, Luke 3. 8 (II Matt. 3. 9), but also coming from the lips of a character in another of the parables which Luke recorded; see Luke 14. 24.
- 41 Compare our Lord's use of a similar expression in chapter 8 verse 18, but there with the significant addition of the word 'seems'; 'Take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him'. There the Lord urged His disciples to listen carefully to what He taught them, because, if they proved to be indifferent and disobedient, God would reveal more truth to them, but, if they did not believe and act on what they heard, God would remove from them even that truth which they thought they possessed.
- 42 Compare J. D. M. DERRETT, *Law in the New Testament*, page 194.
- 43 T. W. MANSON, *The Sayings of Jesus*, page 248.
- 44 1 Cor. 9. 25; 1 Thess. 2. 19; 2 Tim. 4. 8; Jas. 1. 12; 1 Pet. 5. 4; Rev. 2. 10.
- 45 Luke 19. 17, 19.
- 46 Matt. 25. 21, 23; Luke 19. 17. 'Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes . . . then each one's praise ('commendation', 'approbation') will come from God', 1 Cor. 4. 5.
- 47 See note 35 above.
- 48 Eph. 5. 16; Col. 4. 5.
- 49 The word translated 'slay' occurs only here in New Testament; cf. its use in the Septuagint, Ezek. 16. 40; Zech. 11. 5. It is a strong word signifying 'kill off', 'slaughter', 'cut down'.
- 50 'Now Archelaus took possession of his ethnarchy, and used not the Jews only, but the Samaritans also, barbarously; and this out of his resentment of their old quarrels with him', Josephus, *Wars*, Book II, Chapter VII, paragraph 3.
- 51 Luke 19. 43-44.
- 52 See Ezek. 20. 33-38, of which F. A. TATFORD wrote, 'The events . . . do not appear to relate to the past, but rather to Israel's future experience under the hand of Jehovah at the time of the end and prior to their ultimate restoration to their own land', *Dead Bones Live; An Exposition of the Prophecy of Ezekiel*, page 114.
- 53 JOHN NELSON DARBY, *ibid.*, page 362.
- 54 Luke 19. 28.
- 55 Eph. 4. 8, 10.
- 56 Luke 19. 12.
- 57 This anecdote purportedly comes from one of two volumes ('Humor in the Court' (1977) and 'More Humor in the Court' (1984)) written by Mary Gilman, the editor of the *National Shorthand Reporter* in the United States.
- 58 Gal. 6. 10.



GARDENTOWN ASSEMBLY GAMRIE, SCOTLAND 1946 to 2011

Gardentown is a small fishing village on the Moray Firth in the North East of Scotland and up until the end of the Second World War there was no New Testament assembly gathering according to the scriptures in the village. There were a few baptized believers spread among a number of local churches including the Church of Scotland and the exclusive companies. These believers had been saved as the early 20th century revival spread along the Moray Firth and as local fishermen travelled south to Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth in search of catches.

During the war, two believers from the village were posted by their respective forces, one to the Orkney Islands and the other to Northern Ireland. During these postings they both learned the truth of believers' baptism and of gathering only to the Name of the Lord Jesus. They were both baptized and received into local assemblies – one in St. Margaret's Hope in Orkney and the other in Londonderry. During these days they maintained contact not only with each other but with other believers in the North East of Scotland and in the fishing communities in Fife. Their fellowship locally, and regular contact with these other believers greatly helped the two brethren in deepening their knowledge and understanding of the scriptures and divine truth. They determined on their return to Gamrie after the war to establish a New Testament assembly in the village. Both of their wives were baptized in Cullen assembly and, in 1946, they began to plan for an assembly to be established. They had a problem, however, which seemed to trouble them – neither of them could sing! The Lord was however looking after even that seemingly small matter.

At around that time a couple and their daughter moved to the area from Manchester, where the brother had been stationed. They intended to move to Fraserburgh, some twenty miles from Gamrie. They were unable to find a house in

Fraserburgh but found a suitable property in Crovie immediately adjacent to Gamrie and came to live there – they were, as a family, excellent singers!

These then formed the nucleus of the assembly in Gamrie and they first gathered in mid-1946 to remember the Lord in an ante-room in the local public hall.

They met there for some time and the assembly prospered with believers moving to the area and other local folks being saved, baptized and added to the company. They yearned for a place of their own in which they could establish and expand the testimony. A man in the village had a particularly large garden with two long barn-like sheds. One of these was purchased and converted into a Gospel Hall. The assembly continued there into the 1950's and numbers steadily increased. An article appeared in the local newspaper, submitted by a visitor to the village in which he spoke of being moved by the beautiful strains of Crimond and Belmont being sung in harmony – emanating not from a large beautiful church building but from an old barn.

In 1956 the other shed was purchased; both buildings were demolished and a new hall was built. It opened with a well-attended conference on the 23rd March 1958. Speakers at that conference were Peter Murray, Isaac Cherry, Jack Gamble, and David Fyall. The assembly grew to around forty-five in number during the latter half of the 1950s and was helped by the ministry of a number of brethren from across Scotland, who in their

turn, received much blessing and encouragement from the warmth of fellowship enjoyed in the assembly in Gamrie. Also, while most of the local brethren had to be away for periods of time to follow the fish shoals, the assembly was greatly supported by a number of brethren who travelled from Aberdeen on a regular basis to help maintain the work. During this time the assembly continued to be very active in Sunday School work, open-air outreach, Bible readings and ministry – the Lord blessing their activity.

During the 1960's numbers reduced somewhat as young people had to move to other areas for employment and a number of older brethren were called home. At one time there were eight widows in the company – true 'mothers in Israel' with a care for the saints and providing needed hospitality. The Lord continued to work among the believers in the village convincing of the need for baptism and commitment to the local testimony so much so that in 1973 a total of four couples and a sister were baptized and received into fellowship and the Lord continued throughout the decade to add to the company such as should be saved.

The assembly currently numbers thirty-two in fellowship, but is still impacted by the need for some to move out of the area for employment. However, the saints continue with enthusiasm, still seeing good numbers of unsaved attending gospel meetings. The believers' experience of the sea seems to add an edge to the gospel witness and a closeness in the fellowship which many who visit from time to time are privileged to enjoy.





Titus was one of Paul's fellow-workers who, over the space of nearly twenty years, undertook some difficult and demanding tasks at Paul's instigation. The apostle was involved with Titus from his earlier days in Antioch until his final days in Rome and described him as his own son, brother, partner and fellow-helper'. Such a person must have many lessons to teach us today!

Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch for quite a time after their first missionary journey, Acts 14. 26-28. During that time, false teachers came from Jerusalem insisting that the Gentiles had to be circumcised to be saved. Paul and Barnabas were the chief opponents of this erroneous teaching and the assembly at Antioch decided to send them to Jerusalem 'unto the apostles and elders', to sort out the problem at its source. Paul, through whom Titus was saved, Titus 1. 4, and the assembly at Antioch, were of one mind in choosing Titus, among others, to go up as well. He was one of the unnamed 'certain other of them [the assembly]' mentioned, Acts 15. 2. The Jewish believers encountered on the way up to Jerusalem were delighted to hear of 'the conversion of the Gentiles'. Initially, the same reception seems to have been given at Jerusalem, 'but there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, 'That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses'. It seems that the requirement of circumcision was just part of their demands, for law-keeping altogether was demanded.²

After much discussion, both Peter, James and John supported Paul with the result that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised.³ Although slow to throw off the shackles of the law themselves, they recognize that they should not trouble the Gentiles with legal burdens. Concerning the false brethren who brought in the error, Paul wrote of them, 'to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you [Gentiles]'. James asked the party from Antioch that Gentile believers should nevertheless be sensitive to their Jewish neighbours and that 'they would that we should remember the poor', Gal. 2. 10. Paul said of himself 'the same

Personalities in the Those who were a delight to TITUS

which I also was forward to do'. However, Titus was equally attentive to the request as we will see later.

Titus learnt important lessons during those days: first, the truth of the gospel and its defence against Jewish opposition, and, second, the importance of remembering the poor, especially the Jewish believers in Judea and Jerusalem. Both these principles would occur again in his ministry.

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About seven years later, Titus, along with an unnamed brother, 2 Cor. 12. 18, was entrusted with the delivery of Paul's severe letter to the assembly at Corinth from Ephesus. After some time, when Titus had gauged the reaction to the letter, he was to meet Paul at Troas. However, when Paul arrived at Troas, Titus had not turned up and although Paul was active in the gospel there, we read, 'I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia', 2. 13. In Macedonia, he was eventually joined by Titus, who had travelled north from Corinth. Paul had always told Titus that the Corinthian believers were good-hearted, especially with respect to the poor, despite the present difficulties. He had gloried in them, but would his boasting of them be justified? Would they respond positively to his letter? Compounded with this inner turmoil, Paul experienced outward persecution in Macedonia, so that 'our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears', 7. 5. However, all was well, for eventually Titus turned up with good news and 'God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more', vv. 6-7. He had good

news respecting the Corinthians and to them he wrote, 'we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all', v. 13.

The assembly had shown true repentance and had expressed a great desire to put things right. Paul's joy mirrored that of Titus, whose 'spirit was refreshed by you all', v. 13, and 'our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth', v. 14. 'And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things', vv. 15-16.⁴

However, the second reason for Titus being in Corinth was to urge the Corinthian believers to finish their collection that they had instigated some time before, 1 Cor. 16. 1-3, for the poor saints at Jerusalem, a year before the saints in Macedonia had a chance to collect. Titus no doubt remembered James urging Paul not to forget the poor, Gal. 2. 10. Now, he was able to urge on the saints in this matter. Paul thought it a good idea for Titus to return to Corinth to finish the collection, but he did not have to force Titus to return, for he was of one mind with Paul in this matter, which Paul attributed to God, saying, 'But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you', 2 Cor. 8. 16-17. In fact, three went down to Corinth, the other two, although not specifically named, were well commended by Paul and the assemblies of Macedonia, vv. 18, 19, 22. Paul's own commendation of Titus was 'he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you', v. 23. It was to these men that Paul hoped the assembly at Corinth would show 'the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf', v. 24.

There were still some in the assembly at

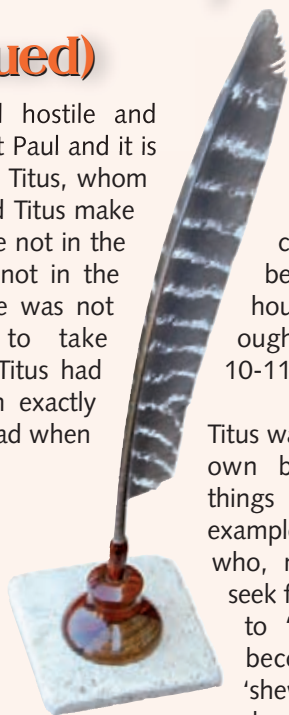


Pastoral Epistles (4)

Paul (continued)

Corinth who harboured hostile and suspicious thoughts about Paul and it is to them that Paul said of Titus, whom he had sent to them, 'Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?', 12. 18. He was not trying to use Titus to take advantage of them, for Titus had behaved among them in exactly the same way that Paul had when he was with them.

As far as we know, Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment and was able to recommence his work. At this time he was in Ephesus with Timothy, but he was then eager to move on to Macedonia and left Timothy to finish their work. He requested, among other things, that he correct doctrinal disorder, 1 Tim. 1. 3, for which the epistle was his written authority. Similarly, he was in Crete with Titus and wishing to move on (possibly to Ephesus where he would leave Timothy), Titus is left, 'that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee', Titus 1. 5. This was no easy thing to do, for one of their own prophets, Epimenides a Cretan poet, 600 BC, had said, 'The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies', v. 12, and that was exactly what Paul had found, so he added, 'This witness is true!' Because of this, Titus was told in general to 'rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith', v. 13. However, the particular problem that needed Titus's special attention was false teaching coming from Jewish quarters, since Crete had a large Jewish population, see Acts 2. 11. Following his earlier visit to Jerusalem with Paul and Barnabas, Titus would have had first-hand knowledge of how to answer false doctrine raised by Jewish teachers. The solution was either that he should tell the believers to take no notice – 'Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth', Tit. 1. 14; 'But avoid [shun] JND] foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and



strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain', 3. 9, or else teaching that they should be silenced – 'For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake', 1. 10-11.

Titus was to give special attention to his own behaviour, by speaking good things and showing a good personal example. This would silence his critics who, not liking the message, would seek fault in the messenger. So he was to 'speak . . . the things which become sound doctrine', 2. 1, 'shewing . . . a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you', 2. 7-8. Speaking and showing must go together; the lip and the life must coincide!

Paul's charge to Titus was – 'These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee', v. 15. Although, like the whole epistle, this was a personal message, it was meant to be read to all, hence Paul ends the epistle, 'Grace be with you all', 3. 15. Thus, all were to hear it and from it understand that Titus was to derive his authority from apostolic support. Similarly, for us today, our authority is derived only from the scriptures.

Paul's last instruction to Titus was that, upon being relieved by another worker whom Paul would send to replace him – either Artemas or Tychicus – Titus was to make his way to Nicopolis, on the western coast of (what is now) Greece. He was to bring Zenas and Apollos with him, who must also have been labouring in Crete or would be in the near future (did they bring the letter?), vv. 12-13. Paul had decided that this would be a good place to spend the on-coming winter, when moving around would be more difficult.⁵

In his missionary journeys, the furthest point west that Paul had reached was

Illyricum (modern-day Croatia), Rom. 15. 19. Perhaps, after wintering at Nicopolis, he, with Titus, had travelled north along the Adriatic coast and had managed to return to Illyricum and its coastal region of Dalmatia. Whatever happened, Paul's activities were soon curtailed when he was re-arrested and taken back to Rome. Titus accompanied Paul to Rome, but from Rome he had gone to Dalmatia, 2 Tim. 4. 10, following his own exercise in the Lord's service and that is the last we hear of him. Paul mentions this along with news of a number of other movements. He wanted Timothy to do his best to come quickly because he had lost a number of his companions through their move-ments, v. 9; Crescens had gone to Galatia, and, sadly, Demas had forsaken him, 'having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica', v. 10. Like John Mark before him, Acts 13. 13; 15. 38, Demas was not prepared for the difficulties involved in Christian service. Love for this present age led him to desert Paul; he was not one of those whom Paul had just mentioned 'that love his appearing', 2 Tim. 4. 8. The 'now' held his affections, having lost the love for the 'then', the soon-coming of the Lord. Now Demas has gone home to Thessalonica, but Titus is still far from home serving the Lord faithfully in Dalmatia.

To describe Timothy as timid and Titus as tough would be an oversimplification. Titus was the kind of person who was robust enough to face many different kinds of difficulties and do well.

References

- 1 Titus 1. 4; 2 Cor. 2. 13; 8. 23.
- 2 This makes sense when we think of the proposed requirements for believers of both genders.
- 3 Gal. 2. 9; Acts 15. 1-7.
- 4 This compares with Paul saying to the Corinthians about Timothy – who was expected to arrive at Corinth some time after Titus, 1 Cor. 4. 17 – 'Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren', 1 Cor. 16. 10-11. We do not know if he turned up, but he was later in Macedonia when Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, 2. Cor. 1. 1.
- 5 cp. Acts 27. 12; 28. 11; 1 Cor. 16. 6.

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CHRIST'S MEETING WITH N

The last three verses of John's Gospel chapter 2 set the background to the account in chapter 3 of Christ's meeting and discussion with Nicodemus. Nicodemus, a leading religious figure of his day, would have heard about Christ's miracles in Galilee and that He had driven from what they considered to be God's house, the temple, those who engaged in commerce there. He would have listened as Christ taught the people in Jerusalem, heard His claim to be the Messiah and learned something of the kingdom He had come to establish. These things were of great interest to Nicodemus as a religious Jew. His greatest desire would be to become a member of God's kingdom and his whole life would be given to achieving this through keeping the law and its overlay of tradition.

Some translations link the closing verses of chapter 2 to chapter 3 with a conjunction. YOUNG, *Young's Literal Translation*, uses the word, 'But', and DARBY, *New Translation*, the word, 'And'. In this way Nicodemus is presented as an outstanding example of humanity. The Lord Jesus carefully explains to him that none, religious Jew or indifferent Gentile, can enter into God's kingdom on personal merit.

There are two further references to Nicodemus in John's Gospel and in both it is recalled that he came to the Lord Jesus at night. Much has been said and written about this, but the reason may be less complicated than is sometimes suggested. Could it simply have been that he was deeply troubled? Did the things he had seen and heard in Jerusalem trouble him so much that he needed to discuss them urgently with the One whose words had given rise to these concerns? He could not rest in his bed that night.

The chapter reveals much about Nicodemus. He was a member of the main religious group of the day. He was a Pharisee. Pharisees believed that the greatest of all blessings was to be

born a Jew. They taught that all Jews had a right to blessing in God's kingdom and that Abraham their father guarded the entrance to Gehenna to keep them from judgement. Nicodemus was a 'ruler of the Jews', 3. 1, and so was a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish council of the day. YOUNG translates the phrase in verse 10 as 'the teacher of Israel', which shows Nicodemus to be head of one of the rabbinical schools in Jerusalem and, as such, on a par with the apostle Paul's esteemed tutor, Gamaliel.

Nicodemus states his reasons for seeking out the Lord Jesus, 'We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him', v. 2. The matters that troubled him most lay behind the words he spoke and it was these that the Lord Jesus addresses in His reply, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God', v. 3.

The Lord would not have spoken to a troubled Nicodemus in terms he did not understand. 'New birth' or to be 'born again' were expressions familiar to Nicodemus. He understood them to relate to any entry into a new phase of life or to the formation of a new association. He could, therefore, in his terms, truthfully say he had already known new birth and would quote as examples his ordination as a Pharisee, his appointments to the Sanhedrin and as head of a rabbinical school, or even his marriage.

This explains his puzzled and perhaps impatient reply, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' v. 4.

In effect, he was saying, 'I know about new birth and it has been my experience on a number of occasions! What more can you expect of me? Do you expect me to enter again into my mother's womb and be born?' Christ patiently *explains* to Nicodemus important matters about new birth and then, as the supreme Teacher,

illustrates these by reference to an incident from the Old Testament scriptures.

Nicodemus had some difficulty understanding the distinction between physical birth which could give only earthly privilege to a few, and spiritual birth that could bring eternal blessing to all. The Lord Jesus said, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh', and implied it could only remain as such. All Nicodemus' attainments, many and commendable though they might be, were generated in and by the flesh and would remain things of the flesh. They were fleeting in their nature, would die with his physical death and so could never enable entry into God's kingdom.

New birth results from the action of the Holy Spirit of God. It is a secret process of conviction and regeneration in the heart that enables knowledge of God, affection for Him, and strength to follow and serve Him. It is a personal relationship with God that becomes visible to the human eye only in its results and consequences. It is a principle that if new birth exists it must become evident through its growth and development. The Lord Jesus explained this by reference to the blowing of the wind. The wind is invisible in its being but we become aware of its action and the consequences. So the Lord Jesus said, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again', vv. 5-7.

The Lord Jesus then goes on to illustrate what He had already explained, by reference to the Old Testament scriptures, Num. 21. 5-9. Nicodemus would have been familiar with this incident involving the children of Israel in the wilderness. He would have read and taught it in the synagogue, to the people and to his students. God judged the people because of their sin and disobedience

By
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ICODEMUS **John 2. 23-3. 21**

by sending fiery serpents amongst them. They lay dying, but in mercy healing was provided in the form of a brazen replica of a fiery serpent lifted high so that it could be seen by all in the camp. The simple and only requirements for healing were repentance and a look in faith upon the raised brazen serpent. Many looked and were healed. None knew



how the healing was brought about; it was a work of God seen only in its results. In no way could they physically contribute anything to their healing. It depended entirely upon God's provision and their willingness to accept it. This would have spoken powerfully to Nicodemus.

The Lord Jesus then identifies Himself as the One who would complete and give final meaning to the illustration, 'Even so must the Son of man be lifted up', John 3. 14. He indicates eternal blessings that result from simple acceptance, 'That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life', v. 15. The discussion is finally placed in the context of the clearest statement about salvation in the New Testament, v. 16.

The further references in the Gospel of John reveal the changed attitude and feelings of Nicodemus. In chapter 7 verses 45-53, the chief priests and Pharisees express anger toward officers sent to trap and capture the Lord Jesus but who returned without Him. Nicodemus opposes the rest of the Council and asks, 'Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?' v. 51. In chapter 19 verses 38-40, he, with Joseph of Arimathea, took the body of Christ, lovingly anointed it with a mixture of myrrh and aloes, bound it in linen cloth with spices, and laid it in the tomb.

The pursuit of knowledge and practice of religious ritual came as a barrier between this sincere man and God. Salvation is finally a matter of the heart, hatred of sin and sins, and affection for the One who makes forgiveness possible. Nicodemus had to learn of his sinful condition, 2. 23-25, his hopeless position, 3. 5, that to remain in such a state would bring judgement, 3. 16, and that Christ is the only Saviour, vv. 14-15. As Christ revealed Himself to Nicodemus, his affection was drawn to Him and he entered into the eternal blessing of new birth.

CYRIL CANN has been in fellowship for many years with believers at Bovetown Gospel Hall, Glastonbury, and is a retired teacher.

New Website



The Precious Seed Trust is pleased to announce the launch of our revamped website:

www.preciousseed.org

The site has been re-launched to include many new and updated features. The site is easier to use, and more intuitive. Of particular interest are the following features:

Home Page: We have continued with a daily thought that comes from one of our 'Day by Day' series of books. We hope that this will be an encouragement to you as you read it each day.

Search Function: An updated search function to over 3000 articles! You can search by Title, Issue, Category, Series, Author or by a word or phrase. The database is a valuable resource for any Bible student wanting to know more about a particular scripture or subject.

Bookshop: The bookshop has been updated to include a preview of each book. You can browse through the first few pages, allowing you to get a feel for the book and its style.

Past Magazines: By selecting 'Past PDF's' from the 'MAGAZINE' tab, you can download the latest magazine in seconds. You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to do so and there is a link to their site on the page.

The 'CONTACTS' page allows you to contact the committee with any question you may have. We will endeavour to answer your question and we may even publish the question and answer (anonymously, but with your permission) on the back 'Question Time' page!

We hope you will enjoy the new website and, while you browse, why not email us to tell us what you think of the site and how we can improve it further.





FACING THE

By **MALCOLM C. DAVIS**
Leeds, England

This article considers from scripture the various mind frames in which we often view the future, varying from complete hopelessness, through deep interest, to joyful expectancy. Whatever our current spiritual condition and circumstances may be, its aim is to prepare us all to face that future with a more positive frame of mind than perhaps we often do at present. Contemporary world events around us do not naturally encourage anyone to do this with great confidence. There is, in the world generally, a prevailing uncertainty and apprehension concerning the future. Through simple faith in Himself and implicit obedience to His word, only the God of the Bible can give us calm confidence in the face of future events.

1. Without Hope

Sadly, but inevitably, this must be the bleak outlook of all unbelievers. It is certainly the outlook explained by Paul in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 12, where he elaborates on the absolutely hopeless condition and position of unconverted Gentiles before their new birth by God's resurrection power. And, today, in view of the turmoil and prevalent fear surrounding us all in an unstable world, true believers in Christ can be very thankful that their hope for the future does not depend upon their own resources or wisdom, but only upon a sovereign and loving God and Father. He, in spite of all outward appearances, does really care for us, His own people, and also extends His offer of salvation to all who repent and believe the gospel of His grace. Be thankful that it is still the day of opportunity to be saved, forgiven, and regenerated to a new life given to us by His dear Son. It is only because He loved us, each personally, and gave Himself for us at Calvary. Yes, God is still on the throne, and He will look after His own! And the wonderful fact is that all who read these lines could be

part of that happy company who form 'His own', by simple faith and trust in Christ. He is our only hope for eternity, and for the rest of our lives here on earth. The gospel invitation is still open to all.

2. After Failure

This is the sorrowful outlook of a backslidden, true believer. How can such an unhappy saint ever face the world and his or her own fellow-saints again? The painful memory of past sin continually haunts them. Is there a way back to a normal relationship with the Lord and their brethren and sisters in the assembly? Thankfully, there is. Consider the examples of two believers in scripture who sinned grievously, namely, David in the Old Testament, and Peter in the New Testament. David has recorded his experience of heartfelt repentance and confession to God in his penitential psalms, such as Psalms 32, 51, and 130. He was broken-hearted that he had so dishonoured his Lord. Peter, also, 'went out and wept bitterly', after the Lord Jesus had turned round and looked intently and meaningfully at him following his denial of Him three times. The Lord had said to Peter in warning, 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak', and the event had proved this true. But when both David and Peter had come to the end of themselves and simply cast their future on the mercy and grace of God, then, and not before then, they received complete forgiveness of their sins. We shall probably never know what transpired during the private meeting which the risen Lord Jesus had with Peter, nor are we meant to know. The Lord does not needlessly expose His failing children before their fellow-believers. Those who have, by God's grace, remained faithful to Him should not think that they could never sin in the same way, for 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked', Jer. 17. 9. Only God Himself fully knows the potential for





FUTURE – PART 1

evil latent in all of us. 'Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall', 1 Cor. 10. 12. But both David and Peter came to know that 'there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared', Ps. 130. 4, and both were restored 'out of the depths' of despair about themselves.

The way back is actually the very same way which we took when we first came to Jesus as unconverted sinners for salvation. We must learn all over again the joy of forgiveness through repentance and faith in Christ and His precious blood shed for us on Calvary to pay the price of our sins. This is very humbling to our natural pride, but absolutely necessary for restoration after failure. So we shall be able once again to feel at home in our Lord's presence and to look our fellow-saints in the eye. And they, for their part, should be prepared to extend the right hand of fellowship to all who have truly repented and shown genuine evidence of a changed life. It is hypocritical to do otherwise. The seeds of failure are still within our own hearts. How we all need to keep short accounts with God!

3. With God

This is a believer's normal outlook when he or she is in a right relationship with the Lord. For it was to this happy condition of soul that Peter was restored by the risen Lord Jesus following his tragic lapse of faith. Now, the Lord could use him, and will be able to use us, in ways that previously were impossible. In John chapter 21, He commissioned the restored Peter to shepherd His sheep and feed His tender lambs. Not long afterwards, in Acts chapter 2, Peter became the spokesman for all the apostles on the Day of Pentecost, explaining that event to the bewildered crowd of Jews who had witnessed it, and then in preaching the gospel to them all. The once fearful Peter became the foremost apostle to the Jews, and, eventually, willingly laid

down his life for his Lord, crucified as a martyr. Truly, 'with God all things are possible'. Who would have thought that God could have used such unpromising material! But 'with God' even failure need not be final. In fact, the Lord is usually pleased to reveal His own almighty power through very frail human vessels rather than through those who seem much stronger, because this magnifies His own grace, wisdom, and glory all the more. So we may take heart. If the Lord could use someone like Peter, with all his failings, in His purpose to build His church, then surely He can



use us also in His service today. He is the God of the impossible! Nothing is too hard for Him; no one who repents is beyond His redemption!

4. 'In Peace'

This is the contented outlook of the praying Christian. In Philippians chapter 4, the apostle Paul tells us that this is the true and effective antidote to our natural anxiety

about many difficulties in our lives. And Paul certainly knew this, since at the time he was writing this letter to the Philippians he was suffering many privations in a Roman prison. In chapter 4, he tells us to rejoice in the Lord, rather than in our circumstances, and to do so at all times. He recommends that we make our supplications known to God with thankfulness for all His mercies towards us. This should remove anxiety from our souls. Then, instead we shall know the blessing of God's very own peace flooding our hearts and minds, and thus protecting us like a military garrison from distracting and disturbing thoughts. Unconverted people around us, who know our troubles, will probably not understand how we can be so calm in the midst of them, but Paul says that God's peace does surpass all natural human understanding. If our minds are focused on all that is true, honest, right, pure, lovely, and in every other way good about every circumstance and person we meet, and if we practise only such things ourselves, then we shall know the comforting presence with us of the God of peace Himself, His blessed fellowship. A pure and clean mind that is concentrated primarily on the person of Christ Himself, who is the supreme embodiment of all these virtues, is the key to true peace of heart and mind. Then, we shall be able to be content with our lot, whatever our circumstances may be. For Christ will be able to pour His own strength into our lives continually, and so enable us to face all the challenges that we meet. Certainly, in Luke chapter 2, Simeon was able to face his own death with complete calmness after he had seen the Lord's Christ as a baby, for He embodied God's great salvation. Hence, Simeon was able to say in verse 29, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word'. Yes, the praying Christian becomes a powerful Christian, as well as a peaceful Christian.

MALCOLM DAVIS was saved in 1951 in Colchester, Essex, baptized in 1956, and, with his wife Ruth, has been in fellowship with the saints at Harehills Gospel Hall in Leeds since 1980. He has written a number of articles for *Precious Seed International* as well as other assembly magazines.





So Great Salvation

By **JEREMY SINGER** Swinton, Manchester, England

In Luke chapter 15, the Lord Jesus presents three variations on a theme that depict different aspects of the 'great salvation' we have come to know. In this article, we want to examine the scene at the end of each story to discover three unchanging truths – namely: (1) our security; (2) God's word; and (3) the joy of salvation. We began to experience these blessings at the moment we were saved, continue to know them as long as we remain here on earth and will still enjoy them throughout eternity.

Eternal security – the sheep never leaves the shepherd's shoulders

As soon as the shepherd discovers his lost sheep, he lifts it onto his shoulders, v. 5. The sheep is carried safely home in this place of warmth and strength. When we were saved, we were rescued by the Lord Jesus Christ who is the stronger Man, Luke 11. 22. As the Great Shepherd, He cares for us and we have gradually learned to appreciate the strength of His hands, John 10. 28, His arms, Deut. 33. 27, and His shoulders, Luke 15. 5. In the same way that Jehovah carried a fledgling nation on eagles' wings, Exod. 19. 4, the Lord Jesus supports individuals who come to faith in Him.

The Shepherd's strength is perfectly combined with gentleness. Shoulders are a place of intimacy. The loving Shepherd is close enough to hear the sheep's heartbeat and feel the sheep's breath. Conversely, the sheep rests in warmth and comfort, fully assured both of the Shepherd's strength and tenderness. This experience is afforded

only in grace to the wanderer who is rescued. The sheep which have been recovered by the Good Shepherd have the privilege of continuing to know His provision and protection throughout life's journey, as Psalm 23 describes. The theme of eternal security is emphasized by the sheep's position upon the shepherd's shoulders. The Lord Jesus has promised that we 'shall never perish', John 10. 28. In the same verse, we have His assurance that no one can 'pluck them out of my hand'. The permanence of our salvation does not depend on our faith's feeble hold of Him. Rather, our salvation is entirely secured by His gracious grasp of us.

Eternal word – the light never goes out

The woman finds her missing coin only when the light is lit, v. 8. There is no possibility of recovery and rejoicing without the aid of the candle! We can note that there is no mention that the light is extinguished for, at the close of this short parable, the woman's house remains illuminated by the lamp.

It is clear that the lamp, v. 8, is an unambiguous metaphor for the word of God, Ps. 119. 105. This light should be brandished by the church in the power of the Holy Spirit, Acts 4. 31. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the incarnate Word, radiated such light when He was here on earth, John 1. 1-5. Now the written scriptures provide light to the world as believers engage in 'holding forth the word of life', Phil. 2. 15-16. We first appreciate the lamp when we are saved, but the Bible

remains valuable throughout the entire journey. Young Christians like Timothy need to read the scriptures, 2 Tim. 3. 15, as do old Christians like Paul, 4. 13. Paul reminded Timothy of the 'profitable' nature of scripture, which is just as true in the 21st century as it was in the first.

Eternal joy – the celebration never ends

When the prodigal son returns, immediate celebration is commanded by the glad father in Luke chapter 15 verse 23. The party is in full swing when the elder son arrives on the scene. The elder son's journey to home was far shorter than the younger son's homecoming. It seems that those who travel further have a greater appreciation of home! Despite the elder son's attitude of resentment, the father and the younger son are joyful. This honest, earnest celebration is entirely different from the 'riotous living' that the prodigal had experienced in verse 13.

The Christian life is seen as a holy festival celebration, 1 Cor. 5. 8. Joy from the Holy Spirit enters our souls the moment we are saved, 1 Thess. 1. 6. This joy should remain with us and develop in us throughout our Christian experience, Gal. 5. 22, and will be consummated when we get to glory, Jude 24.

JEREMY SINGER is married and is in fellowship in the assembly in Swinton, Manchester, England. He has a particular interest in children's work. This is his second article for *Precious Seed International*.



LIFE TV AL HAYAT

'That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth', Acts 13. 47

By **ROMEL GHOSSAIN** Sydney, Australia

Media tabloids frequently tag the 21st century as being the age of the *Digital Revolution*. This idea that individuals have the ability to transfer or access information freely and instantly from anywhere across the globe was formerly complicated or impossible to do.

PDA's, tablets, social networking sites, Google, Wikipedia and a host of other gizmo's and applications have created an insatiable thirst for this type of technology. What's more, it has created a mass dilemma for so many people who struggle to keep up to date with the changing trends.

As a result, our world has been transformed from hard copy to soft copy and from copper wire to optical fibre, so that the letters 'www' precede every recognized or known organization. However, this hi-tech age has not come without prejudice and concern. For instance, it has highlighted new dangers which we are still coming to terms with. Nonetheless, one can appreciate the positive aspect of what this digital revolution has done - it has opened up new opportunities that previous generations could not even dream about.

For example, the digital world has given rise to a huge number of satellite channels. No longer are we restricted to traditional analogue signals, but like

internet sites, hundreds of new channels flood the airways and are being beamed across regions and lands where the gospel was previously considered taboo.

One channel in particular is Life TV (Al Hayat) which commenced in September, 2003 and is aired across New Zealand, Australia, the Middle-East, Europe, North America, North Africa and many other key locations. This channel is a free-to-air, 24-hour Christian channel which broadcasts primarily in the Arabic language and with occasional programmes in English, see www.lifetv.org.au. It also provides many devotional and educational programmes such as:

- God is Able
- Biblical Characters
- Daily Bread
- Questions about Faith
- The Sound of Testimony
- A Daring Question, which is produced by a group of ex-Muslims
- Worlds Apart – speaking the truth in love
- Misconceptions – rightly dividing the word of truth

Interestingly, the channel has become famous for its apologetic and Christian-Islamic dialogue-based programmes and has subsequently become one of the most controversial channels in the Middle-East through its live shows,

where Muslims and Christians can ring in and ask challenging questions, www.islamexplained.com.

While this channel competes against secular mainstream channels, it has enjoyed phenomenal growth and success which is without doubt, a blessing from the Lord. Keep in mind that Life TV is watched regularly by up to 100 million people and with the potential to expand its audience in selected South Asian countries that figure could dramatically escalate.

A number of believers who fellowship at Kingsgrove Gospel Chapel in Sydney, Australia, are involved in this ministry, including its Australian director who has asked that this ministry become a source for vigilant prayer. While Life TV Australia is not in total control of every programme, it contributes to a range of gospel and teaching programmes for its viewers. The assembly at Kingsgrove, commenced in 1986 and currently has about 240 believers in fellowship; seventy of whom attend the youth group meetings. It holds regular meetings in Arabic and English.

Life TV is a faith ministry which produces programmes from its studio in Sydney, Australia. It is headed by a team of dedicated workers but for security reasons the exact details cannot be disclosed.

Many hundreds of people from different religions contact the channel asking for copies of the Bible and want to make a profession for Christ. There are far too many stories and testimonies to detail in this article, although we would like to encourage and inform the saints abroad about the impact of this channel upon the lives of many around the world, not least in areas where it is a capital offence to preach the gospel.

On a recent visit to Sydney, Mr. Roy Hill, chairman of Precious Seed Trust, was invited to be the interviewee in a ten-part series about the family unit. The show was titled '*World's Apart – Speaking the truth in love*', Eph 5. 23. The recordings took place each morning for a week. This particular show aimed to demonstrate the difference between what the Bible teaches and what the secular world practises. The ten interviews of 30 minutes each will be aired later this year.

For further information please email Romel Ghossain at info@lifetv.org.au

Romel Ghossain (right) interviews Roy Hill on the TV 'set'.





Proper order in worship and, indeed, in the affairs of life is exceedingly important to God, 'for God is not the author of confusion but of peace', 1 Cor. 14. 33, and He desires that 'all things be done decently and in order', v. 40. Satan is the author of deception and confusion, John 8. 44, but God sets in place standards of proper order to confound his attempts to pervert divine truth. The tabernacle is such a standard; it is meticulously designed to present to man the timeless realities of God's holiness and righteousness, as well as His means to reconcile sinners to Himself.

The theme of this final section of Exodus is defined by God's words to Moses, 'And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it', Exod. 25. 8-9 NKJV. Accordingly, the next six chapters can be summarized as follows: the construction and furnishing of the tabernacle, 25. 1 – 27. 19; the priest's attire, provision, and consecration, 28. 1 – 29. 46; and lastly, a description of who may worship in the tabernacle and of how they should worship God, chapter 30. In Exodus chapters 25 to 30, two contrasting themes are presented: first, how God approached the sinner through Christ, and second, how the blood-atoned sinner is permitted to approach God through Christ; C. H. MACKINTOSH explains:

'This section is divided into two parts, the first terminating at Exodus 27 verse 19, and the second at the close of Exodus 30. The former begins with the Ark of the Covenant, inside the veil, and ends with the brazen altar and the court in which that altar stood. That is, it gives us, in the first place, Jehovah's throne of judgement, whereon He sat as Lord of all the earth; and it conducts us to that place where He met the sinner, in the credit and virtue of accomplished atonement. Then, in the latter we have the mode of man's approach to God — the privileges, dignities, and responsibilities of those who, as priests, were permitted to draw nigh to the Divine Presence and

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enjoy worship and communion there. Thus the arrangement is perfect and beautiful'.¹

The pattern of the tabernacle shown to Moses went well beyond mere ceremonial function; its deeper intent was to reveal the character of God and of man, and to picture the means of man's reconciliation with God. As a result, the order in which the various features of the tabernacle are presented is a crucial part of the overall pattern and God's message to man.

The first furnishing mentioned was the Ark of the Covenant, Exod. 25. 10-16, and its covering - the Mercy Seat, vv. 17-22, above which Jehovah would dwell in the midst of Israel. Next, the Shewbread is described, vv. 23-30, and then the Golden Lampstand, vv. 31-40, the curtains, 26. 1-14, the boards which composed the walls of the tabernacle, vv. 15-30, and its separating veils, vv. 31-37. Lastly, the Bronze Altar, 27. 1-8, and the hangings about the courtyard and its entrance, vv. 9-19 are described. Thus, God explains the tabernacle furnishings from the inside out. This is the order of sovereign grace; God venturing from His heavenly throne as the Light of the World and the Bread of Life to the outer door to find the sinner where the sinner resides! This speaks wonderfully of the incarnation of Christ - God became flesh and sojourned with hell-bound sinners in order to offer them His grace.

Only after the sinner has been purified by blood does the privilege of serving and worshipping God become possible. The next items mentioned relate to worship. Jehovah commences by describing the most precious of these: the breastplate of the high priest which was worn over his heart at all times, 28. 4. He then explains the consecration of a priesthood, 29. 4-9, the animal sacrifices, then the holy incense to be offered, 30. 1-10, and the Bronze Laver at which Aaron and

his sons were to wash their hands and feet any time they entered the tabernacle, vv. 18-21. This is the order followed by a sinner who responds to sovereign grace - man ventures from his earthly abode into God's glorious habitation (though under the Law this access was limited). ARTHUR PINK concisely summarizes the spiritual significance of the tabernacle order

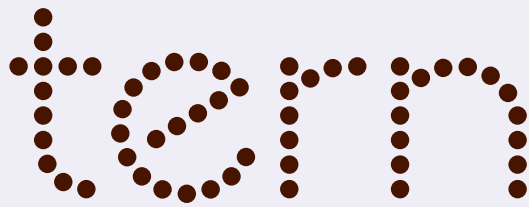
By

**WARREN
HENDERSON**

Rockford,
Illinois, USA

'Marvellous is the progressive order of teaching in connection with the various objects in the tabernacle. At the brazen altar sin was judged, and by blood-shedding put away. At the laver purification was effected. In the holy place provision was made for prayer, for illumination; while in the holy of holies the glory of the enthroned King was displayed. The same principle of progress is also to be seen in the increasing value of the sacred vessels.





Exodus 25, 8-9

Those in the outer court were of wood and brass whereas those in the inner compartment were of wood and gold. So too the various curtains grew richer in design and embellishment, the inner veil bearing the costliest and most elaborate. Again, the outer court, being open, was illumined by natural light; the holy place was lit up by the light of the golden candlestick; but the holy of holies was radiated by the Shekinah glory of Jehovah. Thus the journey from the outer court into the holy of holies was from sin to purification, and from grace to glory'.²

It is notable that the first thing Jehovah revealed to Moses was that He desired to have a habitation, a holy dwelling place, among His people. God had never personally dwelt among men before, but now that the Israelites had been redeemed and knew of His Law,

He could do what He had always longed to do, to dwell among them. This desired communion would occur in the tabernacle's sanctuary, the pattern of which He revealed to Moses. Though some of the craftsmen received guidance from the Holy Spirit, the blueprint for the tabernacle and its furnishings was revealed only to Moses, Acts 7. 44; Heb. 8. 5. Seven times God commanded Moses to follow this pattern; it was from these directions that Jehovah's home among His people would be erected. Besides a sanctuary where God could dwell among His people EDWARD DENNETT notes two additional purposes of the tabernacle:

'The first is their object - which is making a sanctuary, 'Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them'. The primary idea of the tabernacle therefore is, that it was the dwelling-place of God. The tabernacle may, however, be viewed in another way. The house in which God dwelt must be of necessity the scene of the revelation of His glory. Hence, as will be seen when considering it in detail, every single part of it is fraught with some manifestation of Himself. There is yet a third aspect of the tabernacle.

It is a figure of the heavens themselves. There were the court, the holy place, and the holiest. The priest thus passed through the first and second into the third heavens – the scene of the special presence of God'.³

The Israelites were ready to make God a habitation on earth. God had walked with Adam in Eden, He had eaten with and spoken with the patriarchs, but only now was it possible that He would dwell among men. By blood the Jews had been redeemed and by the Law they knew how they could safely approach the holy and eternal God of the universe. The tabernacle would be erected in the centre of the camp and stand as a continual testimony of their redemption, as proof that God had both redeemed and established a relationship with the Israelites. The tabernacle with all of its coverings would be a sign of God's presence among His people. Similarly, the head covering of the Christian woman serves as a reminder to the church that God is present.

However, God's habitation on earth had to be constructed in every detail, according to the intricate blueprint He issued to Moses; not just any kind of erected structure would do. Likewise, the church, God's dwelling-place on earth during the dispensation of grace, is to reflect the glory of God. Paul instructed the believers at Colosse to maintain good order as a testimony of Christ, 'For though I am absent in the flesh yet am I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ', Col. 2. 5 NKJV. God's home on earth must be an accurate extension of His own character and attributes – a testimony for all to see and ponder.

[Extracted with permission from *Out of Egypt*, published by Gospel Folio Press]

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- 1 C. H. MACKINTOSH, *Genesis to Deuteronomy*, pgs. 239-240.
- 2 A. W. PINK, *Gleanings in Exodus*, pg. 187.
- 3 E. DENNETT, *Typical Teachings in Exodus*.

WARREN HENDERSON was commended to full-time service by the Believers Bible Chapel, Rockford, Illinois, USA. He has written a number of books, including devotional commentaries on Genesis and Exodus.





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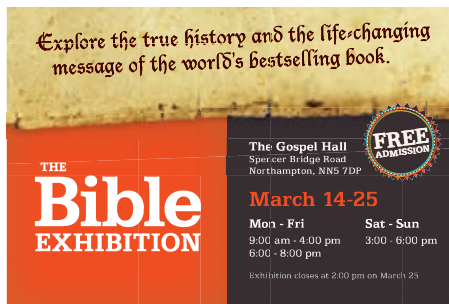
GOSPEL WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

Compiled by SANDY JACK



ENGLAND

Northamptonshire



In March, the believers in **Spencer Bridge Road, Northampton**, hosted the Ayrshire Bible Exhibition for the seventh time. The programme of school visits was oversubscribed with twenty-seven schools and about 1250 children attending. Please pray that the gospel presented during the tour will have challenged children, teachers and helpers. The good response from the schools is a consequence of the extensive school visitation work carried on from the assembly throughout the shire and the visit of the Exhibition in earlier years. The assembly have also had opportunity to present prizes to children in some schools.



Also in Northampton, the assembly at **Osborne Road** has been encouraged following an exercise by the younger believers to commence a Sunday School work, called 'The Light', to complement their weekday children's outreach. Following on from interest in their carol service, the assembly has also started a coffee morning outreach and has been encouraged by around half a dozen people from the locality coming along.

Please pray that God will bless these works and encourage the workers.

Yorkshire

In **Hemsworth** Gospel Hall, near Pontefract, the Saturday 'teas' are still ongoing with up to twenty older people from the town coming in to share a meal and hear the gospel. It is a fact that reaching older people with the gospel is hard and very few trust the Saviour so it is encouraging to have so many under the sound of the gospel. The meetings are still ongoing in three Senior Citizen's homes around the Hemsworth area each month and they consist of a time of hymn-singing followed by a short gospel message. They also are seeing unsaved into their Gospel Meeting most Sunday nights.

Somerset

The assembly meeting at **Pensford** Gospel Hall has a regular outreach to the village and beyond. Every Wednesday afternoon there is a Ladies' Meeting which is reasonably well attended. Four times a year evangelical literature is distributed to the 400+ homes in the village and further afield there is a monthly visit to a Residence for Seniors in Midsomer Norton. Up to twenty residents attend. The assembly has also recently revised its website and hopes that it will be used by the Lord as a means of contact with locals and visitors. It is www.pensfordgospelhall.org.uk



Merseyside

The open-air work in **Liverpool** continues to attract good numbers of people listening to the gospel on a Tuesday and Friday lunchtime (and once a month on a Saturday). There

has been opposition from time to time but this has served only to attract a crowd. Please pray for the people who listen and in particular pray for Lance, Ken, Mark, Joseph and Marianne.

The assembly in Bethany Hall, **Huyton**, has been running a monthly 'Gospel Tea' outreach for about eighteen months. The numbers of unsaved coming started on the low side but in recent months the numbers have increased dramatically. On occasions in excess of twenty-five unsaved have been in the hall. Please pray for the families who come, Latiff and his family and Mark and his family.

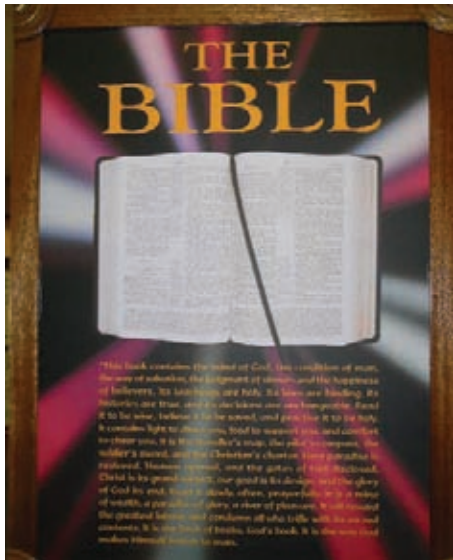
Two assemblies in **Liverpool** have a monthly Sunday evening Bible Class. The numbers of believers attending has been extremely encouraging, reaching over sixty on some nights. Please pray that this interest in the word of God will be the foundation for further blessing.



SCOTLAND

Lanarkshire

At the end of January, the assembly at **Plains** had two weeks with the Ayrshire Bible Exhibition. Over six hundred schoolchildren from primary years six and seven and secondary year two attended. The exhibition was well received by the children and staff who accompanied each class. Some of the schools that came along were those in the area in which Graeme Paterson has an ongoing work of Bible teaching, assemblies, after school children's meetings, class room work and counselling. The children's work from the assembly continues on a weekly basis with a healthy number of children attending. Some mothers bring their children and sit through the gospel address. Before Christmas the local school asked if they could have their Christmas service in the hall, and so the pupils and teachers walked



through the village to the hall led by two Police Officers because of the amount of snow blocking the pathways! In addition to all the school pupils, there were around thirty adults in at the meeting. The school was happy to leave the service totally to Graeme and so he was able to freely preach the gospel. During the winter Graeme and Jim Paterson held gospel meetings in the hall. There were a number of visitors at the meetings, but due to the problems associated with the severe snow and low temperatures the meetings had to be stopped early. Prayer would be appreciated for the ongoing work in the gospel.



The assembly at **Kells** has been holding gospel meetings with John Rogers and Stan Wells in a portable hall in **Tully**. Good numbers have been attending and six have professed to be saved.

At **Banbridge**, Malcolm Radcliffe and David Gilliland had gospel meetings. The Lord has blessed in the salvation of some.

Leslie Craig and Paul McCauley had five weeks of encouraging meetings in **Ballymacashon**. They also had a good reception as they went door-to-door. Several of the local people attended.

In **Ardstraw**, Gary Woods and David McGarvey have also had the joy of seeing some saved.



Romania

During the past six months, quite a few encouraging developments in the work have taken place. Souls are still being saved. The believers are encouraged by some positive problems, such as not having enough space at times to accommodate the large numbers coming along to the modest buildings being used. In **Salistea**, plans are already underway to begin the construction of a new building in the spring and discussions are taking place for an extension in **Gura Raului**. It also seems that the hall in **Geoagiu** will need extending.



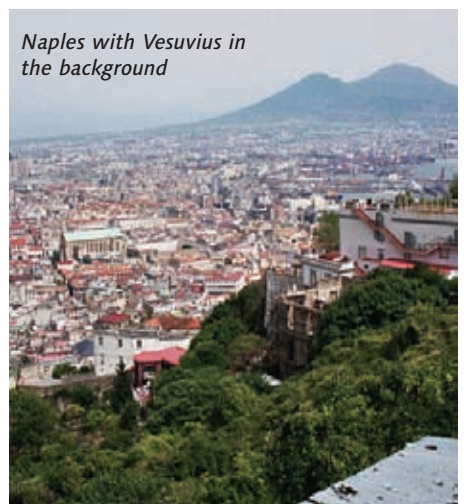
The people of **Orlat** are deeply Orthodox in their beliefs and there is no evangelical witness in the village. In December, Jonathan Kelso made a visit to the Gypsy quarters with a Romanian brother, Andi Ciopasiu. They went to the home of a thirty-eight-year-old man called Ghita who suffers from a chronic heart condition, spoke with him for a long time about his soul and prayed with him. They also spoke to him about the possibility of starting a work with the children. He was very keen for that to happen and offered the use of his tiny home to facilitate this. Ghita then took them down the street to his mother's home and there were quite a few friends and family already there. They had a great opportunity to share the gospel with this family group. An invitation was given to come along to the meeting in Gura Raului on Sunday morning. On the Sunday when Jonathan called for those who wanted to come, seven came along. On the Monday afternoon a meeting for the children was held in Ghita's little one-roomed house; thirty-two children and mothers came along for the first

meeting. Please pray that the Lord will bless in the salvation of precious souls as Christ is introduced to the Gypsy people of Orlat.

Italy

The believers in Naples have seen some baptisms which gave opportunity to witness. The hall was packed to overflowing, with children sitting on the floor and adults standing. The Lord was pleased to bless the preaching, and a sixteen-year-old girl called Brenda, who is the niece of Antonella, one of the ladies baptized, was visibly touched. Please do pray for her, that the Lord would bring her to salvation. The only negative point was that a neighbour who is suffering from a nervous breakdown, called the police, complaining that the singing was disturbing her. Please pray for wisdom and grace, and that the lady herself might find grace and peace in Him!

Prayer has been answered for Emanuele, the son of a Peruvian lady, Noemi, who was converted recently. He was an alcoholic and aggressive, causing much pain to his mother. He is now seeking to evangelize his friends, many of whom are ex-convicts, drug addicts, or in the Mafia. He has also asked to be baptized, so please do pray as the local believers seek to do some relevant studies with him, and that others who have recently been saved will also desire to obey the Lord by being baptized.





A Brief History of the Authorised (King James) Version

Most people would agree that the two greatest influences on the English language are the works of William Shakespeare and the King James Version of the Bible. But, though Shakespeare has done nothing to influence the morals of a nation, the King James Bible has been used of God to shape a nation, and English-speaking peoples of the world, and to reveal Himself to men and women for four hundred years. A prominent critic of Christianity once said of the King James Bible that it is 'unquestionably the most beautiful book in the world'.

It must be remembered that the Authorized, King James, Version of the Bible, first published in 1611, was not the first Bible translated into English. In the 1380's, John Wycliffe was the first to produce a hand-written translation of the New Testament into English, for which his bones were dug up and burned forty-four years after his death. Following the invention of printing by Gutenberg, William Tyndale re-translated and had printed in 1525 an English translation of the New Testament, which was hugely popular, though banned by the king and the church, and for which Tyndale was executed in 1536. The first complete Bible in English was translated by Miles Coverdale in 1535. There followed several translations including the Great Bible in 1539, the Geneva Bible in 1560, and the Bishops' Bible in 1568. The Geneva Bible was the most influential of them all and was the one promoted by many when King James VI of Scotland became James I of England.

Why, then, was another translation into English needed? The answer lies as much in politics as it does in accuracy of translation. When James became King of England on the death of Elizabeth I, he was faced with a sharp division of theological interpretation in England between the Anglicans and the Puritans as Roman Catholic influence had waned. The Puritans were delighted to have James as king of England because he had publicly supported the Calvinistic

By **IAN REES** Carmarthen, Wales

Presbyterianism of the Scottish church. The Anglican party in England were alarmed at his coronation, believing him to be pro-Puritan. In fact, James had been thoroughly disturbed at the Puritan teachings he encountered in Scotland, and was secretly determined not to encourage their influence in England. He was also a firm advocate of the 'divine right of kings', regarding himself as God's representative and regent. The Geneva Bible included in its translation marginal notes that denied the divine right of kings and encouraged its readers to rebel against kings and tyrants who defied God's word. James was, therefore, much more inclined to promote Anglicanism, which linked a king's authority with bishops and the church, than the Puritanism which placed a king under God's authority and under the authority of His word and His ministers. 'No bishops, no king', thought James.



After much lobbying on the part of both Puritans and Anglicans, King James called a conference at Hampton Court in 1604 to arbitrate between the two factions about various ecclesiastical issues including the use of the Anglican Prayer Book. As the conference proceeded, it became clear to the Puritans that the king was favouring the Anglicans more than they had hoped and that James was defending the use of the Prayer Book. One of the Puritans, Dr. John Reynolds, then surprised everyone by proposing a new translation of the

Bible. Surprisingly, James accepted a new translation with alacrity, declaring the Geneva Bible 'the worst of all' English Bibles. Although Bishop Bancroft initially opposed any new translation, the king's mind was made up and the most famous resolution of the Hampton Court Conference was that a new translation of the Bible was to be made 'as consonant as can be with the original Hebrew and Greek; and this to be set out and printed, without any marginal notes, and only to be used in all churches of England in time of divine service'.

In part the Anglican bishops accepted a new translation of the Bible into English because James gave them the ultimate choice of who was to be included in the panel of translators. Those selected were, in the main, either of an Anglican persuasion or were lay professors of Greek and Hebrew. Very few Puritans were on the panels of translators, and Bancroft ensured that the bishops of Winchester and Gloucester were to approve the final draft and he himself had the last say over the printed text. Bishop Bancroft's translation rules, issued to all six panels of translators, included the stipulation that 'the Old Ecclesiastical Words be kept, viz., the word *Church* not to be translated *Congregation*, etc'. And although Bancroft's first rule was that the new translation was to be based upon the Bishops' Bible, he did also stipulate that other versions were to be consulted, including Tyndale's, Coverdale's, and the Geneva Bible.

And so, some seven years after King James authorized a new translation, the King James Bible was printed and circulated. Although it did not receive immediate acceptance, it has become the most influential book ever written. It has been, and still is, loved by millions and we celebrate, this year, the four-hundredth anniversary of a God-blessed translation of His word.

IAN REES is one of the publications editors of Precious Seed Publications.





A WORD FOR TODAY

Lústra (Lystra) Lystra

Lútron, ou, tó (Lytron, ou, to) price of release, ransom

Lútrów (Lytroo) free by paying a ransom, redeem

In his famous paraphrase of Psalm 103 ('Praise, my soul, the King of Heaven'), Henry Lyte compresses verses 3 and 4 of the psalm to simply read, 'ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven'. In doing so, he creates a number of dramatic images, one of which translates for us the idea of being redeemed by the use of the single word 'ransomed'. We might think that this obvious change is no more than poetic licence, but this would be a wrong assumption on our part. What the author conveys to us in this variation is his clear understanding of what the psalmist meant when he used the term 'redeemed'. In the Old Testament, the words 'redeem' and 'ransom' are mutually inclusive, so, for example, where someone was forced to sell themselves into slavery because of debt, Lev. 25. 47-49, the next of kin was legally obliged to take over his debts, and redeem him out of slavery, cp. the redemption of Naomi by Boaz in Ruth chapter 4.¹ Such a payment for their release, or redemption, was closely linked to the process and was known as the ransom price.

The Hebrew noun *pidyôm*, which occurs frequently in the Old Testament, can be translated as 'ransom' or 'redemption' depending on the context, again confirming the enduring relationship between these words. The process of redemption by a ransom payment was primarily for individuals, Exod. 21. 30; 1 Sam. 14. 45, (but it could, additionally, include animals, Lev. 27. 27). In the majority of instances, the release related to some form of legal obligation made possible through the payment of a ransom. This is, however, qualified by Psalm 49 verses 6-10, for if a ransom payment could redeem time, then only the rich would secure eternal life. The word is also used figuratively in the Old Testament to explain how other nations were deemed by God to be the ransom price paid in exchange for the nation of Israel, Isa. 43. 3-4. Significantly, in this context, the basis of the symbolic ransom payment is love, not legal obligation.

The writers of the New Testament were not appropriating and applying new terminology when they used the word 'ransom', and the influence of the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) should also be recognized in the development of this process of redemption. According to MOULTON and MILLIGAN, the word *lytron* ('ransom') was always used in the Septuagint to denote an equivalent.² So when the Census Tax was paid by Israel, Exod. 30. 11-16, the ransom price of half a shekel would enable the individual to be released from a death sentence. In other words, this would reflect the corresponding price for life or the payment made by all classes of people as a substitute. LEON MORRIS states that whenever men perform the act of redemption they do it by paying the price and this price is denoted by *lytron*.³

Other examples from antiquity help us to understand this process of redemption by the payment of a ransom. Josephus tells how Aristaeus agreed to pay more than 400 talents to soldiers as the ransom price for their prisoners – the price of their release.⁴ It was the word used in papyri for the redemption of a pledge⁵ and the sum paid for the freeing of

slaves.⁶ DEISSMANN suggests that three documents from Oxyrhynchus show traces of sacral manumission,⁷ which was the solemn rite of the purchase of a slave from his master by depositing money in the sanctuary of a named deity. A declaration would then be made that as the ransom price had been paid, the slave was now free, and should not again be subject to bondage. Some modern scholars have challenged DEISSMANN'S view, but it should not be dismissed lightly, particularly as it may well provide us with the background to a number of New Testament texts, such as, 'Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men', 1 Cor. 7. 23 KJV, or 'For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of bondage', Gal. 5. 1 ESV.

In the New Testament, *lytron* forms the basic word within the word-group relating to 'redemption'. It is a composite term bringing together the twin concepts of loosing (*lú* from the Greek verb *lúo* meaning to loose), and the payment of something as a price (tron representing the means of loosing). The verb *lytroô* (to loose by a price) occurs three times in the New Testament, Luke 24. 21; Tit. 2. 14; 1 Pet. 1. 18. Surprisingly, the noun *lytron* ('ransom') only occurs twice in the New Testament, Matt. 20. 28; Mark 10. 45, and the later compounded verb 'to pay a ransom' (*ántilytróo*) only once, 1 Tim. 2. 6. Although the related word for redemption (*ápolytrôsis*) occurs far more often in the New Testament, LEON MORRIS confirms, even in non-biblical literature, this word has a clear and consistent meaning and refers to the payment of a ransom price to secure the desired release.⁸

What is therefore evident from all these sources is the common understanding that the biblical and non-biblical world had of the word *lytron*. In terms of our salvation, Christ gave Himself as a ransom to redeem us, and to release us from the bondage of sin. Since He gave Himself, the idea of substitution is all-pervasive, Gal. 1. 4. We should not, however, press the image of ransom too far. As LELAND RYKEN states, 'The emphasis in Christ's atoning work as a ransom lies in the divine costliness and the inability of humans to rescue themselves from bondage; it does not imply a figure such as Satan who has demanded and received a ransom price'.⁹

As we reflect on this word, let us rejoice in the knowledge that the price has been paid for our redemption or, in the words of the hymnwriter, 'But this I know with all my heart, His wounds have paid my ransom'. If the consequence of that precious ransom is that we are now the Lord's free people, 1 Cor. 7. 22, how can we ever again be enslaved to sin, Rom. 6. 6?

For further reading/study

Introductory

Meet the Greek Testament by ADAM FOX.

Advanced

Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, Ed. BY GERALD HAWTHORNE et al.

References

- 1 We will have more to say on the subject of the kinsman redeemer in a later article.
- 2 *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, pg. 383.
- 3 *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, pg. 19.
- 4 *Antiquities* 12.2.3.
- 5 P. Bad. 3, 4.
- 6 P. Oxy. 48b, 49 and 722.
- 7 *Light from the Ancient East*, pg. 327/328.
- 8 *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, pg. 18.
- 9 *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pg. 695.



BIBLE BYTES

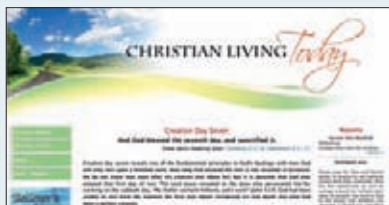
By JEREMY SINGER Manchester, England

DAILY READING SERIES

In the frantic rush of busy working life, I always appreciate moments of calm in the day when I can read a Bible verse or enjoy a spiritual thought. Here is a selection of Christian online portals that I find helpful on a regular basis, often while sitting at my office desk during a lunch break.

<http://www.christianlivingtoday.com>

This attractive, high-quality website is run by John Ritchie Limited. You can sign up for an email every day, or browse the online archive. Each message consists of a key verse, a few paragraphs of comment, and a link to a longer Bible passage. Consecutive messages often have themes. Recently, these have included double calls, the tabernacle, and Luke's Gospel. The messages are anonymous, but obviously written by competent, assembly-based Bible teachers. The website has other useful resources, including reports of gospel outreach and notices of forthcoming meetings.



<http://www.textministry.co.uk>

At this website, you can submit your mobile phone number to subscribe for a free weekly text message. The texts always arrive promptly at 9am on Mondays, providing an excellent start to the working week. Each text message contains an exhortational Bible verse. The translation used is King James Version, although the verses sometimes contain standard 'txt msg' abbreviations.



<http://choicecleanings.gospelfolio.com>

Many Christians will have this familiar daily reading calendar hanging on a wall in the study or the bathroom(!). The main web page on this site is laid out in the same format as the tear-off calendar page, with three daily Bible reading references, a verse, a short meditation, and a poem. Sadly, there is no email sign-up system, so you will have to bookmark the website in your browser for a daily visit. Again, full access is provided to an archive of previous messages, going back to July 2008.



<http://www.dailylight.co.uk>

The Daily Light reading book is well known. Every morning and evening, a sequence of Bible verses follow in a specific theme. As there is no commentary, the reader is left with ample scope for personal meditation. This website follows exactly the same format. My personal concerns are: (1) that the translation used is the New International Version, which I find less easy to read; and (2) that the verses are presented as an image, so it is not easy to cut-and-paste the text into another computer program. Despite these issues, I am sure that many Christians will find this little site to be useful.



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Views from the News

COMPILED BY SANDY JACK

Equality Commission sorry for Christian 'infection' jibe

The Government's equality agency has said sorry for a sneering remark that implied Christian moral values are like an 'infection' that could harm children. The taxpayer-funded Equality and Human Rights Commission had warned that children could be 'infected' by the moral views of Christian foster parents who oppose homosexual behaviour.

The extraordinary remark was published in legal paperwork prepared by Karon Monaghan QC for a court case involving a Christian couple struggling to be approved as foster parents. But the Commission has now issued an apology. It also attempted to distance itself from the suggestion that sexual orientation rights take precedence over religious rights.

The offensive remarks related to a court case involving Eunice and Owen Johns, who say they have been effectively blocked by Derby City Council from fostering because of their Christian beliefs about homosexual behaviour. A statement was published on the Equality Commission's website. It read, 'Earlier this week the case of Johns v. Derby City Council, in which the Commission had intervened, attracted some attention. Unfortunately a mistake within our legal submission led to an inference that we did not intend and which was misconstrued as suggesting that the Commission equates Christian moral views with an infection. This oversight was caused by a drafting error in our submissions to the court. This should have been picked up in our internal clearance process for the legal documentation and does not represent the position of the Commission in any way. Furthermore, the Commission entirely rejects any view (as reported in the media) that rights in relation to sexual orientation take precedence over religious rights. The Commission fully upholds the rights of looked-after children to be supported in their chosen religion or that of their family, in the context of the paramount importance of the welfare of the child. The Equality Act provides protection against discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief as well as on the grounds of sexual orientation and the Commission has produced extensive guidance to explain this legislation, which was introduced by Parliament'.

<http://www.christian.org.uk/news/equality-commission-sorry-for-christian-infection-jibe/>

A scientist's doubts about evolution don't curtail his ability as an astronomer

Dr. Martin Gaskell is a respected expert on supermassive black holes and a long-serving research fellow at the University of Texas. In 2007, he applied for the position of director at the new MacAdam Student Observatory at the University of Kentucky. He stood 'breath-takingly' above the other applicants in background and experience', according to the chairman of the selection panel, but he did not get the job. Unsurprisingly, he sued.

It is not controversial to state that English-born Gaskell is a devout Christian. He has also said that he is sceptical about certain aspects of evolutionary theory and that he respects creationists for being true to the Bible. However, his own views have more nuance and he probably belongs somewhere in the broad church usually labelled 'theistic evolution'. But the mere fact he was sympathetic towards creationists and kept an open mind about evolution appears to have disqualified him from being director of the Observatory. As the chairman of the selection committee emailed afterwards, 'No objective observer could possibly believe that we excluded Martin on any basis other than religion'.

The case was about to go to trial. But, last month, the university caved in and settled out of court. Gaskell was given a payoff of \$125,000, although the university refused to admit any wrong-doing. Nonetheless, this appears to be an unambiguous example of religious discrimination within the American academy. It is hard to imagine the university would have settled if they were sure of their ground.

The case has given rise to a certain amount of hand-wringing in anti-creationist circles. Clearly, Gaskell's doubts about evolution have not curtailed his ability as an astronomer. His achievements in the field tell us that much. But his religious faith has been enough for some to doubt his ability as a scientist. Professor Lawrence Krauss, physicist and neo-atheist sympathiser, writes in the *New Scientist* that doubting evolution should have disqualified Gaskell because it showed he had a 'lack of understanding of the nature of scientific theory'. Richard Dawkins called the university's decision to capitulate 'a farce'.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2011/feb/16/astronomer-evolution-sceptics-creationist>



Karon Monaghan QC

Bits & Bobs

Rare King James Bible found in Wiltshire village church

A rare original King James Bible has been discovered on a shelf in a Wiltshire church. The discovery was made by residents researching the history of St. Laurence Church in Hilmarton, near Calne. Geoff Procter, a member of the parochial church council, said they read about a 'fine chained Bible in a glass case' at the church. They then made the link with a Bible that had been sitting on a shelf at the church for a number of years. Mr. Procter said, 'We started doing some research and discovered that the Bible that, as far as I'd known, had always stood on a shelf at the church was in fact 400 years old'. There are fewer than 200 original printings of the King James version known to exist. And it is believed that the rediscovered Bible is one of the few remaining editions printed in 1611. When it was taken for evaluation to the curator of a Bible museum, one of the first things he said was, 'Whatever you do you must display this so that people can read the word!' Clearly a reminder that what it says is more important than what it is.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-12647043>

Membership of the Pentecostal Church and Jehovah's Witnesses Up, Protestants Down

America is the most developed nation when it comes to religion. It has a dynamic, competitive religious marketplace — which means it has winners and losers! According to a report by the National Council of Churches, the biggest losers are the mainstream Protestant churches — the Presbyterian Church, Methodists and Lutherans are all showing a dip in membership.

While each of them is down just a few percentage points (the data was compiled in 2009 and reported to the council in 2010) the declines have reached into the double digits over the last decade. Some of them are responding with ad campaigns. Pentecostal churches, on the other hand, are seeing a surge in membership. About 150,000 more people are attending the services this year, where members believe that the Holy Spirit can give you gifts, like speaking in tongues. Sarah Palin famously used to attend. 'It seems like one of the attractions to Pentecostalism, it's a full body faith', said a female member of the church. 'It's a faith you can feel'.

The Jehovah's Witnesses, known for their door-to-door preaching, had the largest growth of any single denomination. They believe secular society is corrupt, and that Armageddon is imminent. Famous members include Venus and Serena Williams. Membership shot up 4.37 per cent in a year.

Membership in the Mormon Church also went up, by nearly 80,000 members. With famous members like Mitt Romney, Glenn Beck and 'Twilight' author Stephanie Meyer, the church is doing more outreach to the mainstream media.

The biggest competition for churches isn't other churches, it's other things entirely, like television, the internet and the mall. The new report says that total church membership in America continues to decline.

Fifteen per cent of Americans say they have no religion, though that doesn't mean they've given up on God.

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/american-religion-national-council-churches-reports-pentecostalism-gains/story?id=12931023>

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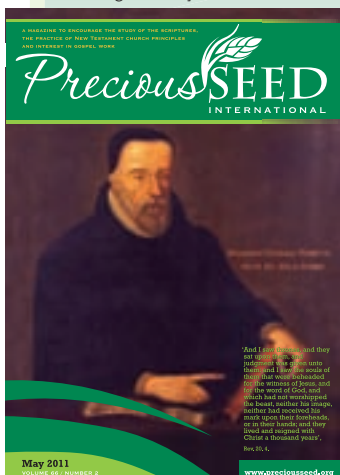
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info@preciousseed.org

Front Cover illustration:

William Tyndale was born in Gloucestershire around 1494. After studying at Oxford and Cambridge he threw himself into translation work. For many years after realizing the importance of the word of God, Tyndale's desire was to have a translation that even the common people could read and understand. One day at dinner, a visiting clergyman said to Tyndale, 'We had better be without God's laws than the Pope's'. To which Tyndale replied, 'I defy the Pope, and all his laws; and if God spares my life, ere many years, I will cause the boy that driveth the plow to know more of the scriptures than thou dost!'

Tyndale embarked on an ambitious work, using for the first time, both Hebrew and Greek texts to translate the Bible into English. By taking advantage of new printing methods, his objective was eventually fulfilled. Of course many were opposed to a new translation of the Bible including Henry VIII and on an October morning in 1536 William Tyndale in the castle of Vilvoorde near Brussels, was tied to a stake, strangled and then his body was burned. Courageously, as Tyndale breathed his last he said, 'Oh Lord, open the King of England's eyes'. God answered the prayer of his faithful translator and did indeed open the king's eyes. Within four years, four English translations were published in England including the Henry VIII 'Great' Bible.

This year celebrates the 400th anniversary of the King James Authorized Version of the Bible, still one of the most popular English translations, that owes a lot to Tyndale's translation work. Thank God for men like Tyndale, willing to dedicate their lives, even to the point of being martyred!



Question Time

Conducted by

RICHARD COLLINGS

Unless otherwise stated all
scripture quotations are
from the New King
James Version

QUESTION

**Will there be different levels of
reward for believers?**

ANSWER

Each person who becomes a Christian passes through three forms of 'judgement'. Firstly, they were judged as sinners, a judgement that took place at the cross when their guilt was transferred to Christ and He suffered as their Substitute. Then, according to Hebrews chapter 12, they are judged as sons, 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives', vv. 5-6. Finally, at the judgement seat of Christ they will be judged as servants and their service will be assessed, 1 Cor. 3. 10-15.

It is surprising that anyone might doubt that there will be different levels of reward, for it would hardly be just of God to reward us all equally. There are those who, from the moment of their conversion, have dedicated themselves to serving Christ and, in some instances, they have sealed their devotion with their own blood. In contrast, there are many Christians who live on the very periphery of spiritual things and whose commitment is minimal. Therefore, to reward everyone to the same degree would not be equitable.

That God will reward any of us is staggering, for we had all fallen short of His standards. There was nothing about us that merited anything other than divine retribution, for we walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. Blinded by the god of this age, and having no strength to rectify our desperate situation, we lived without God and had no hope. Mercifully, God did not invoke His wrath but in infinite love He sent His Son to procure our eternal salvation. In those hours of untimely and impenetrable darkness at Golgotha, the Saviour endured the full weight of God's abhorrence of our sins and He, who was without sin, was made sin for us.

Our response to 'love so amazing so divine' ought to be akin to that of the Hebrew servant who, appreciating all that had been done on his behalf, said, 'I love my master . . . I will not go out free', Exod. 21. 5. As we shall be eternally indebted to God for His undeserved intervention in our desperate state, we owe it to Him to fulfil His interests and to serve Him devotedly. Yet, if we do respond to these obligations God will reward us for it – how gracious He is!

There are several passages in the New Testament that provide information relating to the assessment of our Christian service that will be made by Christ. In 1 Corinthians chapter 3, we discover that the emphasis is on the quality of our service, for Paul states 'each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved', vv. 13-15. This section makes it clear that, depending on the quality of the work done, some will see their labours rewarded whilst others will suffer loss of reward.

In the following chapter, the apostle writes, 'Do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God', 1 Cor. 4. 5 ESV. One of the points that Paul is making is not that everyone will get praise, but that each will receive the praise appropriate to them. Therefore, as the praise given is suited to the individual, the level of reward is going to vary from servant to servant.

Approximately a year after writing the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes to them a second time and, in the fifth chapter, he informs them 'We make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad', vv. 9-10. Again the focus is on 'each one' and on 'according to what he has done'. Because He is omnipresent, each of us will be reviewed by Christ simultaneously. However, as He is omniscient, we shall all be reviewed individually and each will receive the reward He deems appropriate to our quantity and quality of service.

It is both sobering, and encouraging, knowing that the one who will carry out the assessment of our lives and service will be the Lord. It is sobering because there is nothing that will escape His attention. He will 'reveal the counsels of the hearts' for His eyes are as a flame of fire. We can so easily delude ourselves, and others, as to the degree of our piety, but not so Him. However, it is encouraging to know that it won't be our fellow Christians who will examine us but 'the Lord, the righteous judge', 2 Tim. 4. 8. May the prospect of this forthcoming examination motivate us into devoted service for our Saviour so that we may be able to say 'Lord, thy pound hath gained', Luke 19. 16 KJV.