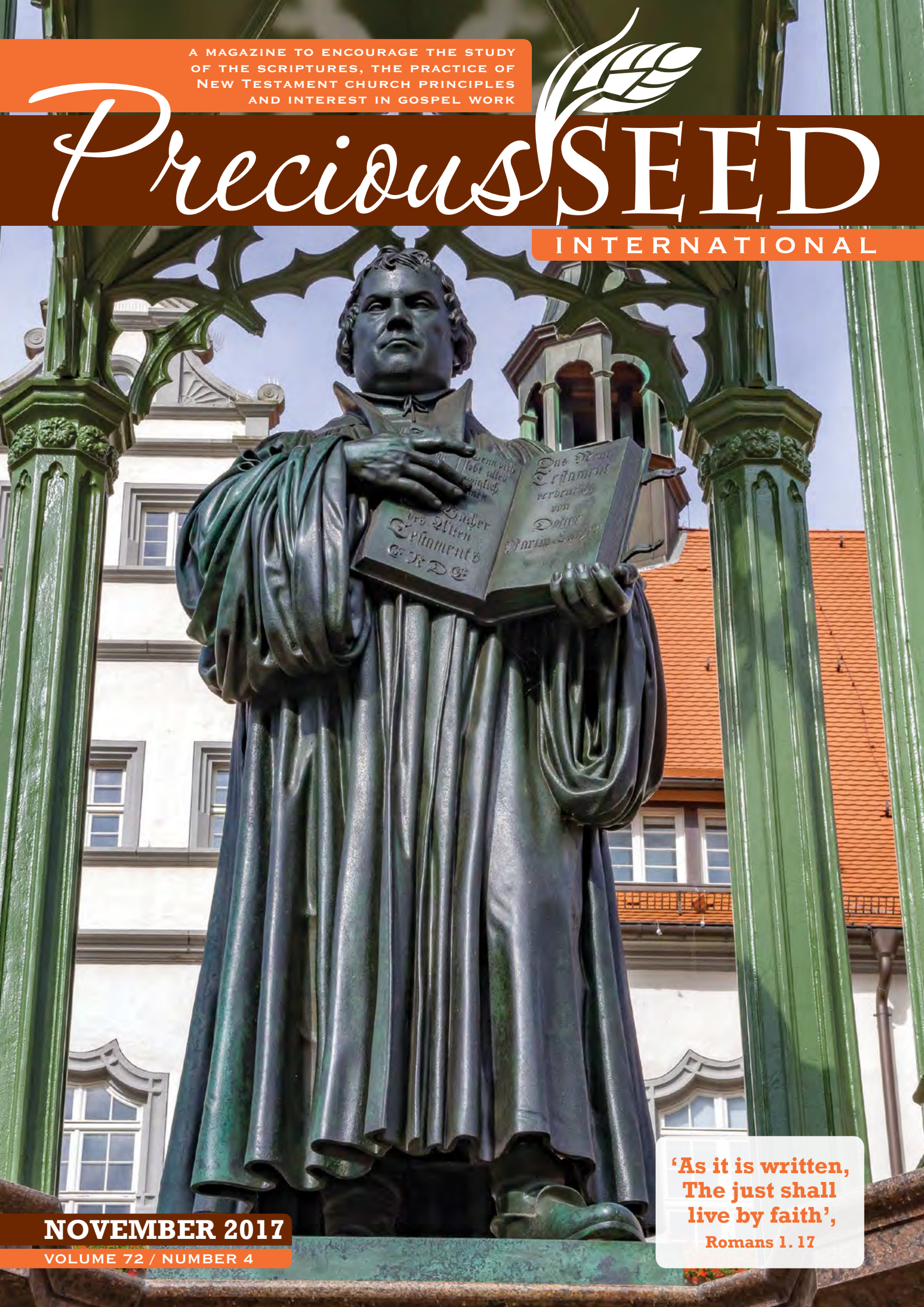


A MAGAZINE TO ENCOURAGE THE STUDY
OF THE SCRIPTURES, THE PRACTICE OF
NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH PRINCIPLES
AND INTEREST IN GOSPEL WORK



Precious SEED

INTERNATIONAL



NOVEMBER 2017

VOLUME 72 / NUMBER 4

**'As it is written,
The just shall
live by faith',
Romans 1. 17**

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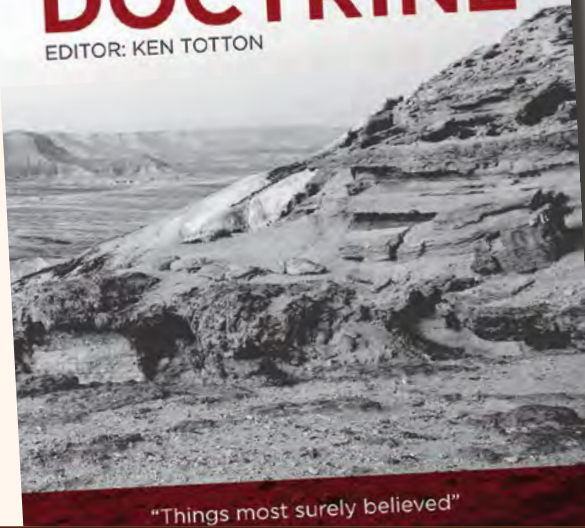
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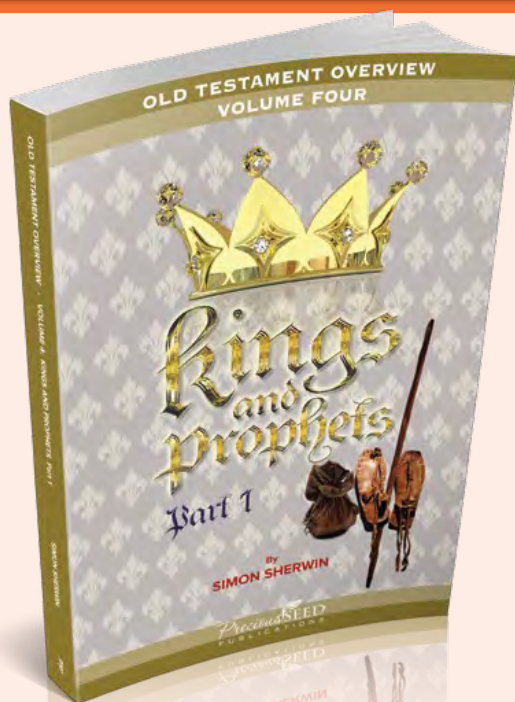
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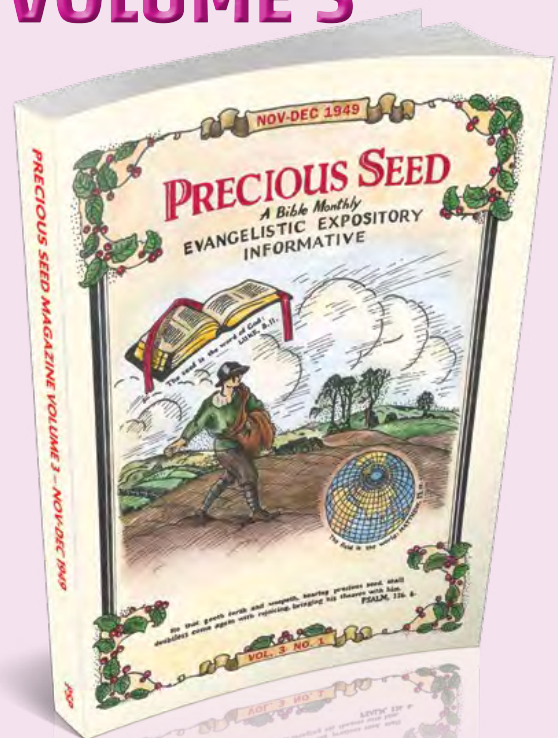


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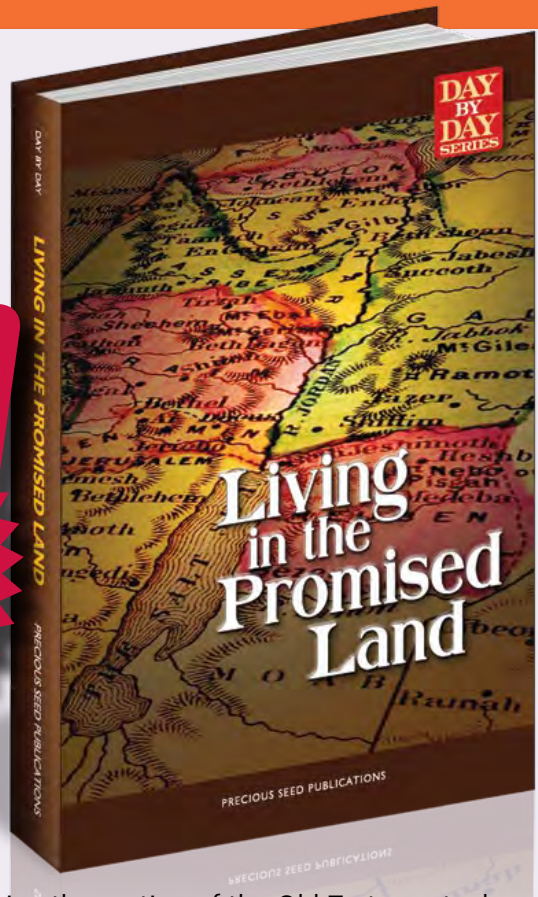
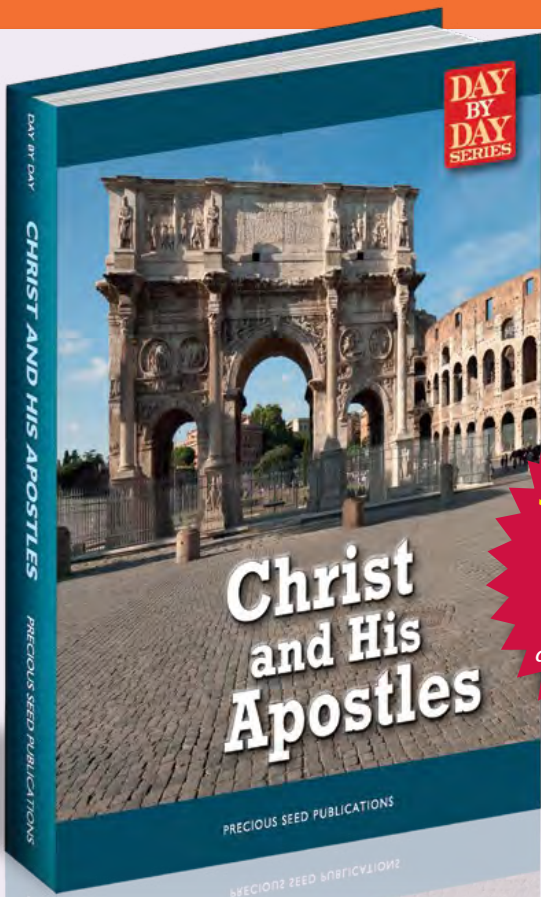
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NEW TREASURY OF BIBLE DOCTRINE
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Editorial

'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep', John 11. 11.

He knows! Although the care and concern of Mary and Martha prompted a message to the Lord, it was not needed to acquaint Him with their sad situation. His intimate knowledge of what was affecting the family at Bethany is fully demonstrated when, without the need for a human messenger, He updates those around him of the death of Lazarus, v. 14. He still is intimately acquainted with the personal circumstances of those He loves. **He knows!**

He cares! It might have been rather surprising to those disciples to hear His initial response. They might have wondered at the reality of His love. Why delay? Why not intervene immediately and restore Lazarus at a distance? Does He care? How carefully the Son of God, the embodiment of divine love, selects His terms, '**Our friend** . . . sleepeth'. In these terms, He underscores His care for His hearers. He reminds them that He considers their friend to be His friend. It is good to appreciate the care which other believers can bring – a blessing which flows from being in the divine family. However, we should not miss the wonderful truth that **He cares** too. True consolation is to be found in the appreciation of 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 7, where Peter, who no doubt experienced these events, would remind us that there is nothing to be gained in carrying our anxieties ourselves, since God 'careth for you'. **He still cares!**

He is able! While others were ignorant of the true circumstances and of the divine plan that lay behind the events that were unfolding, the Lord Jesus was not only aware of divine purpose but He, and He alone, was able to exercise the power required to accomplish that purpose. No human threat could stand in His way, vv. 8-10. No infernal power would be able to resist the loud and mighty cry of this One when He would stand at the mouth of the tomb of His friend. The great 'I am' announces '**I go, that I may awake him**'. **He is still able** to bring glory to God through our circumstances.

Let us never cease to contemplate the beauty and greatness of our Saviour. **He knows! He cares! He is able!**

We do hope that the articles in this issue of the magazine will serve to deepen the love of readers for the Saviour and their appreciation of divine truth, and, in so doing, bring honour 'unto him who hath loved us'. If that is the result, then we can be confident that we have drawn this year's service in this work to a worthwhile conclusion.



THE MESSIANIC PS

'The book of Psalms is a limpid lake which reflects every mood of man's changeful sky. It is a river of consolation which, though swollen with many tears, never fails to gladden the fainting. It is a garden of flowers which never lose their fragrance, though some of the roses have sharp thorns. It is a stringed instrument which registers every note of praise and prayer, of triumph and trouble, of gladness and sadness, of hope and fear, and unites them all in the full multi-chord of human experience'. Thus wrote SIDLOW BAXTER in reference to all 150 psalms;¹ these thoughts are clearly reflected in the refreshing waters of Psalm 16.

By **ROY HILL** Bristol, England

The psalm may be divided into two parts: vv. 1-7, 'The Way of Faith – Preservation', and vv. 8-11, 'The Way to Life – Pleasures for evermore'. It demonstrates how that out of fear grows faith in God and out of death springs life eternal.

Verses 1-7: The Way of Faith – Preservation

Verse 1

The first verse makes it clear that this is a prayer for personal physical preservation. David lived in difficult days; he was hounded by the wicked King Saul who sought his death. While David had opportunities to kill Saul he would not dare to lift his hand against the Lord's anointed. Saul, however, suffered no such strictures and would gladly have slain the man the Lord had appointed and anointed to succeed him. David's cry was indeed personal but was also borne out of a knowledge that should he be slain by Saul that the future of the monarchy and the fulfilment of God's designs could be frustrated, leaving the people of God facing uncertain days and in debilitation hugely vulnerable to attacks by their enemies.

Like our blessed Lord who was persecuted by His enemies and often faced violent hostility, David trusted that God would save him from an untimely death, and that when death did eventually come in God's own time, he would be saved through it and out of it. He seemed to view death not as the end but as the beginning of something new. In God he expected to find a place of refuge, a firm hope and an increasing confidence. His trust was in the Lord to whom he was submissive and because of that his personal experience taught him that this Lord sought only his good and blessing.

Verses 2-3

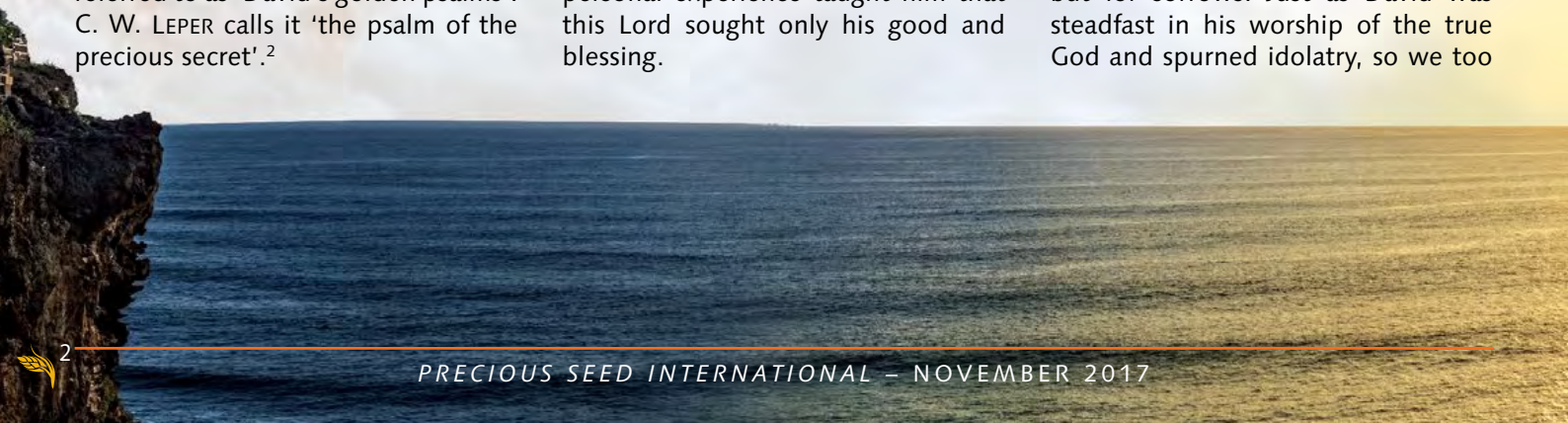
The writer uses three different names for his God in the psalm and each has significance. Here it is 'Jehovah', which suggests the eternal and unchanging nature of God. In such an One, David trusts. The phrase 'my goodness extendeth not to thee' is difficult to fathom and almost every Bible translation has something different to offer. Some commentators have it that David has nothing he can add to God, so he will add whatever he can to the people of God. J. J. S. PEROWNE thinks the sense may be 'my good, my happiness, is not beyond or beside thee'.³ That is, that David's interests are right in line with God's interests. God is personally involved in David's life. However, I think CONGLETON captures the thought nicely as he translates, 'Thou art my Lord; Thou art my happiness: I have nothing besides thee'.⁴ He is also encouraged by the saints that are in the earth, as they, too, clearly depend on the Lord for preservation and are living examples of God's faithfulness. Of course, the Lord Jesus had a unique relationship with God and while here on earth He knew Him as God. He also and always was His Father. He knew that His Father would never forsake Him. He also took comfort in those who followed Him, albeit sometimes afar off. He loved them and delighted in them. We too know that we can trust God, and as far as the contemporary saints are concerned we take pleasure in them and as God blesses them we are pleased for them. The saints of the psalm were indeed the salt of the earth, and both David and God delighted themselves in them.

Verse 4

Those who decide to follow (run quickly after) other gods are destined not for blessing and preservation, but for sorrows. Just as David was steadfast in his worship of the true God and spurned idolatry, so we too

There is no doubt that this psalm is messianic in that it speaks clearly not only of David's hope but also most clearly, in its closing verses, of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Vital truths and compelling prophecy are packed into few words and the message is clear: 'the Lord is risen indeed'! This 'golden psalm' is quoted by Peter, Acts 2. 25-28 and Paul, Acts 13. 35, both declaring the words to be prophetic of our Lord's resurrection. This psalm was written at least 1000 years before it was fulfilled.

This is a psalm of David and one of the six in the Michtam group, psalms 16 and 56-60, all of which concern the rejection of David as king. The thought is of something put on display for public appreciation and understanding. The custom was that such information would often be engraved on a pillar or otherwise displayed, perhaps in golden lettering, thus catching the attention of all. Hence, the Michtam psalms are referred to as 'David's golden psalms'. C. W. LEPPER calls it 'the psalm of the precious secret'.²





PSALMS - PSALM 16

should not be attracted to idols, as, without question, that is the road to sorrow and ruin. David determined to steer well clear of idolatry and not even speak of its adherents. Satan attempted to seduce the Lord Jesus into worshipping and serving himself, but was pointedly rebuffed, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord God, and him only shalt thou serve', Luke 4. 8.

Verses 5-7

Here David acknowledges the Lord as his allotted portion. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land each tribe was given a geographical portion of it. The Lord gave to each the portion He judged was best for them. The Levites, however, had no material portion. Their blessing was to serve the Lord God of Israel. It was not theirs to tend the ground nor to be distracted by material things. David sees this special place of nearness as something freely given to him by God and he rejoices in it. It is from this position that he now mentions other blessings that flow from it: my cup; my inheritance; my lot; my lines; my heritage; my reins; and, additionally in verses 8 to 10, my right hand; my heart; my glory; my flesh; and my soul. Interestingly, in quoting this psalm, Acts 2. 25-28, Peter adds, 'my tongue was glad'. The repetition of 'my' would indicate an intensely personal relationship between God and David. The reference to 'my cup' seems to suggest the enjoyment of these things, while 'my inheritance' declares that these blessings for him are totally undeserved. They go on to express thoughts relative to his current circumstances assigned by God, and also his daily security.

This list of things which express David's appreciation of his special place would also depict for us how the Lord Jesus appreciated similar blessings from the Father as He lived the thirty-three years of His life

here on earth. In spite of complaint, persecution and rejection, no word of protest ever crossed His mind, nor His lips. He was here to do the will of God and understood what was to be done and how it would be achieved to the glory of God and thus provide temporal as well as eternal blessings to the saints who in daily life today enjoy these things also. Verse 7 is an acknowledgement of divine direction both day and night.

Verses 8-11: The Way to Life – Pleasures for evermore

Verses 8-9

Clearly David had determined that the Lord would be his unshakeable goal and constant companion. The Lord was at his right hand so ensuring, as indicated in other psalms, power, safety, favour, support and victory. No wonder he was confident that he would not be moved; indeed He set His face as a flint to ensure the fulfilment of His mission. In response to this David cries out in thanksgiving because of the gladness, joy and hope provided. He speaks of his heart, glory and flesh – perhaps another way of saying spirit, soul and body, i.e., his whole being. He believed that such a blessed relationship on earth could not be ended with death – these blessings must and do lead to life beyond the grave. This, of course, was true of Jesus, now crowned with glory and honour, and will be realized in our personal experience too.

Verses 10-11

Having started out with a plea for preservation on earth, the psalm ends on a very high note involving resurrection and eternal life and glory. For David the grave would not be the end and the corruption of a sinful human body would be overcome in resurrection and the provision subsequently of a body of glory. This is likewise true of believers

today and we know that whether our bodies are alive or dead at the rapture we shall rise to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord – blessed assurance! Verse 11 speaks of the path, the presence and the pleasures. Death is but a path to life and to the enjoyment of eternal closeness and mutual pleasure in His right hand; death is swallowed up in victory, and that for evermore.

These verses undoubtedly prophesy the resurrection of the Lord Jesus who Himself alone is the 'Holy One'. His body was not left in the grave, nor His spirit in Sheol, neither did His sinless body see corruption in the three days and nights it was in the earth. In Him is demonstrated the path to life, the fullness of joy that heaven affords and pleasures undiluted by the sorrows that had been His, and ours, during the experience of human life on earth. When one sinner comes to faith there is joy in heaven among the angels. When all the saints of all ages are gathered together there will be fullness of joy.

As we gaze into the limpid lake of this psalm we see that it indeed becomes a river of tremendous consolation, and we praise God for that and trust Him to complete His good work in us.

Endnotes

- 1 SIDLOW BAXTER, *Explore the Book*, Vol 3, Zondervan Publishing House, 1960, pg. 83.
- 2 CHARLES W. LEPPER, *Things Concerning Himself*, Drummonds Tract Depot, pg. 76.
- 3 J. J. S. PEROWNE, *The Book of Psalms*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1976, pg. 192.
- 4 LORD CONGLETON, *The Psalms, a New Version*, James E. Hawkins, 1860, pg. 23.





John chapter 6 verses 48 to 52

The Jews state, in verse 52, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' The passage relates to the Lord's discourse on the bread of life. The bread of life gives life to those who eat it. Reference had been made to the manna in the wilderness which was for sustaining life. There was no power in it to give eternal life to those who ate of it. The Lord sought to point out His coming from heaven, and, if any person ate the bread of life, he would not die. He spoke of men eating His flesh but not in a physical, literal way. The idea is *unthinkable*. The passage really makes clear that to eat of Him is to believe on Him. By believing we partake of the benefits of Himself and His work.

However, the Jews did not appreciate His teaching. They could not appreciate that He was using physical things to teach spiritual matters – an *unknown* truth was revealed. The Lord tried to explain it further, in the following verses, but the outcome is revealed to us in verse 60, 'this is a hard saying'. Many followers thought His teaching was offensive, hence the Saviour's words in verses 61, 'Doth this offend you?'

Ultimately, many disciples went back and walked no more with Him – *unpalatable* teaching! They turned their back on the Saviour.

John chapter 7 verses 27 to 31

Some said, 'Howbeit we know this man whence he is', v. 27. They had already queried, 'How knoweth this man letters having never learned', v. 15. The people of those days did not accept that He was the Christ. Where did the Lord come from? Some were living in the expectation of the Messiah and some expected Him to come from Jerusalem, and others from Bethlehem, so no wonder we read, 'There was a division among the people because of him'. There was a lack of *understanding*. They were ignorant of His person. They did not fully appreciate the Lord's miracles, wonders and signs, for they asked, 'When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?' v. 31. It took a blind man, chapter 9, to see the truth!

This Man 2

By **JOHN TINKLER** Red Row, Northumberland, England

John chapter 7 verses 45 to 47

Officers had been sent by the Pharisees and the chief priests to take the Lord. These men must have listened, awaiting their opportunity to carry out their task. The people were divided, and the officers came back empty handed. Their mission failed. The soldiers were disarmed by the words of the Saviour Himself. Here is an *undisputed* fact: 'Never man spake like this man'. What glory there is in His words: words of peace, power, and pardon!

John chapter 9

Three times the Lord is referred to as 'this man' in this chapter:

Verse 16: 'this man is not of God', spoken by the Pharisees.

Verse 24: 'this man is a sinner', said the people.

Verse 33: 'if this man were not of God he could do nothing', said the blind man.

The miracle of the restoration of the blind man's sight is related in only seven verses, but the narrative reveals many who opposed the work of the Lord. However, against that we have the increasing appreciation of the one who received the benefit of the miracle: a man, v. 11, a prophet, v. 17, of God, v. 33. The parents of the man were in fear of the Jews, for if they said the miracle worker was Christ, v. 22, that would mean excommunication from the synagogue. This man, whose life was changed, came to appreciate the One who wrought the miracle on him. Here we have the uniqueness of the person of Christ.

John chapter 10 verses 39 to 42

We will insert this short section into our consideration. The Lord went to rest, recall, and reflect upon where his ministry began. But we have here the comment of scripture itself that 'John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true'. The forerunner was preparing the way of the Lord, and all that he said in his

life was true concerning the one who was to come. Like John, the Lord was *uncompromising* in His preaching and teaching.

John chapter 11 verses 34 to 37

Jesus wept. This indicates the true humanity of the Saviour, and His love to Lazarus and his sisters, v. 5. But the people were about to witness a great miracle – one who had been dead four days raised to life. Sadly, the Jews looked on and asked, 'Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?' v. 37. This is *unreasonable* thinking. We know that He could have dealt with Lazarus beforehand, but our Lord's ways are past finding out. Here, instead, He revealed Himself as the resurrection and the life, and, despite this comment, many believed on Him, v. 45; 12. 11.

John chapter 11 verse 47

'This man doeth many miracles'. They were in a quandary. The evidence was overwhelming yet they 'took counsel . . . for to put him to death', v. 53. This was an incontestable fact. They had three options: either to follow Him, to ignore Him, or put Him to death. It's amazing that here is One who went about doing good and they wanted Him to be put to death!

John chapter 18 verse 29

'What accusation bring you against this man?' Pilate asks. Their allegations against the Lord were lies, *unsupported* accusations. The Jews desired the Lord's death, but they lacked the legal authority to carry it out. Shady dealing and scheming is evident, as they did not want the Lord at all. J. N. DARBY wrote, 'God's ways are behind the scenes, but He makes all the scenes which He is behind'.

John chapter 18 verse 40

'Not this man, but Barabbas' – *unwanted*. John merely states of Barabbas that 'he was a robber'. What a contrast to the 'just person'



in whom men could find 'no fault'. Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. 'They denied the Holy One and Just', Acts 3. 14.

John chapter 19 verse 12

The Jews cried out, 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend'. Here is a clear ultimatum. Would Pilate be a traitor to Caesar? This comment challenged Pilate's reputation and standing before his superiors. Thus, to preserve his position he pronounced judgement upon the Lord. He heard that saying and yet, despite the Lord's innocence, he gave sentence for the Lord to be crucified. The Jews hated Caesar, but they hated the Lord, their Messiah, more!

Mark chapter 15 verse 39

In considering the theme of 'this man' in the Gospels, one passage must not be overlooked. The recorded words of the centurion standing near the cross were, 'Truly this man was the Son of God'. This is the last recorded words at our Lord's crucifixion. What compelled the *unnamed* soldier to say these words can only be speculation. He may have witnessed other crucifixions, where he heard oaths and swearing. Here, he heard the Lord's words as He hung on the cross. This scene, and all the events surrounding it, provoked him to say these words and for them to be recorded in holy scripture – an *undeniable* truth to us who believe.

As we bring this meditation to a close, we cannot but recall the lovely story found in Genesis chapter 24, when Abraham sends his servant to obtain a bride for Isaac. He is led to Rebekah and when he realizes that God has led him to her he is anxious to return to his master for the completion of his task. Rebekah's family want her to stay a little while longer, but they ask her a straightforward question, 'Wilt thou go with this man?' v. 58. She says, 'I will go'.

In our experience, the Spirit of God has said to us, 'Wilt thou go with this man?' We have seen that He is indeed the Saviour, the Messiah, the Lord Himself. We have said in our heart and in our lives, 'I will go', and we have never regretted that decision to be part of a bride to a man whom we have not seen but with whom we will spend eternity.

Chairman's Notes

As 2017 draws to a close I trust that we can all give thanks for the Lord's blessing over this year. It may have been a hard year for some, but the Lord has seen us through the disappointments, sadness, and struggles. For others it may have been a very happy year, when they got saved, baptized, received into fellowship, married 'in the Lord' or some other spiritual milestone. In whatever circumstance, it is appropriate that we give thanks, and acknowledge the Lord's goodness as we take another step nearer heaven.

On behalf of the Trustees, I would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to you, the readers, for your continued prayerful and practical support. Apart from the printing of the magazines and books, there are many other things which your support enables us to do. Over this last year in particular, we have been able to donate over 2000 books to believers in the developing world, particularly Botswana, Tanzania, and Zambia; to poor believers in India; and to those who work among children in the United Kingdom and abroad. We have also supported requests for the translation and use of our materials in Portuguese, Romanian, and Tamil.

Although we always ask that magazine orders are reviewed to avoid wastage, we print extra copies to enable us to replace any that are lost in distribution. You will be pleased to know that any copies that are not taken up for this purpose are sent to believers in Zambia.

This quarter will see the retirement of one of our Trustees. When Ian Grant joined us in September 2009, we all felt that it was a long way to come to each meeting, from Aberdeen, especially when they were held in Bristol! We pay tribute to his willingness to travel, his contributions to meetings, and his work as editor of the articles on 'Histories and Services'. This was not the easiest of roles, but the variety of topics he has covered has been fascinating and informative, not least the recent venture into aspects of the Lord's work overseas. We wish Ian well in his retirement.

As Ian retires, we welcome Frank Proudlock to the Trust. Frank is in fellowship in the assembly that meets in the York Street Hall, Leicester, England, and will be well-known to some. We appreciate his willingness to help us as, in the will of the Lord, the work progresses into its seventy-third year.

Maranatha.

John Bennett

Chairman and General Editor





Simon Peter was one of the most dynamic figures in biblical history. During his career in Christ's service he accomplished several astonishing feats: walking on water, Matt. 14. 29; helping to feed the 5,000 and 4,000; vv. 13-21; 15. 32-39; hauling in a miraculous catch of fish, Luke 5. 5-11; and the great confession at Caesarea Philippi, Matt. 16. 16, just to name a few of his apostolic activities. On a personal level, his qualities are a familiar compendium of everyday traits that readers find in themselves. By God's amazing working, Peter became one of the most used men in the unfolding drama of redemptive history.¹ Among his many successful labours, two events stand out as 'his finest hour': the opening of the door of faith to Israel, Acts 2, and to the Gentiles, Acts 10.

THEIR FINEST HOUR PETER

By **KEITH R. KEYSER** Gilbertsville, Pennsylvania, USA

Opening the door of faith for Israel and the Nations

single-minded servant of Christ. With all his imperfections, he has given us a pattern that many Christians would do wisely to follow. Zeal like his may have its ebbs and flows, and sometimes lack steadiness of purpose. Zeal like his may be ill-directed, and sometimes make sad mistakes. But zeal like his is not to be despised. It awakens the sleeping. It stirs the sluggish. It provokes others to exertion. Anything is better than sluggishness, luke-warmness, and torpor, in the church of Christ. Happy would it have been for Christendom had there been more Christians like Peter and Martin Luther, and fewer like Erasmus'.³

one ever intruded, and interfered, and tempted Him as Peter repeatedly did also. His Master spoke words of approval, and praise, and even blessing to Peter the like of which He never spoke to any other man. And at the same time, and almost in the same breath, He said harder things to Peter than He ever said to any other of His twelve disciples, unless it was to Judas'.⁴

Using Key Number 1 at Pentecost

At Caesarea Philippi the Lord marked out Peter for a dispensationally unique work in these words, 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven', 16. 19. ESV. That this work of 'binding and loosing' is a heavenly authority that is conferred on the church as a whole is demonstrated a few chapters later, 18. 18-20. But Peter in particular was given the keys, as RYLE points out, '[H]e was to have the special privilege of first opening the door of salvation, both to the Jews and Gentiles. This was fulfilled to the letter, when he preached on the day of Pentecost to the Jews, and visited the Gentile Cornelius at his own house. On each occasion he used "the keys", and threw open the door of faith. And of this he seems to have been sensible himself: "God", he says, "made choice among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe", Acts 15. 7'.⁵

Fifty days after the Lord's resurrection, He fulfilled His promise to pour out the Holy Spirit on the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Peter and the other disciples began to proclaim the good news in various foreign languages that they had never previously studied. This display of supernatural power elicited incredulity from some bystanders in Jerusalem and mockery from others,

An everyman becomes God's man

The Lord Jesus selected His closest disciples from the ranks of ordinary people. Prominent among them were fishermen like John, James, Andrew, and his forceful older brother, Simon. Christ recognized his strong personality by conferring on him the nickname, Cephas, or Peter, John 1. 42 – in Aramaic and Greek respectively. Nevertheless, his natural forwardness needed to be tempered and instructed by the Lord's gracious pastoral ministry.

The historian PHILIP SCHAFF captured the extremes of his personality, describing Peter this way, 'He had an ardent nature, a sanguine, impulsive, hopeful temperament, was frank, open, fresh, enthusiastic, and energetic, and born to take the lead, but apt to overrate his strength and liable to change and inconsistency. He was the first to confess and the first to deny his Lord and Saviour, yet he repented bitterly, and had no rest and peace till the Lord forgave him. He had a great deal of genuine human nature, but divine grace did its full work, and overruled even his faults for his advancement in humility and meekness, which shine out so beautifully from his Epistles'.² J. C. RYLE added, 'With all his faults, Peter was a true-hearted, fervent,

The Lord progressively chipped away at this rough-hewn stone until he was Peter, the heaven-inspired spokesman who uttered the great confession at Caesarea Philippi, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God', Matt. 16. 16. It is true that he had notable failures, such as attempting to correct Christ a few moments later, and, more famously, denying his Master three times in the priest's courtyard on the night before Calvary, 26. 69-75. Yet, in spite of these serious missteps, he eventually became a mature, Spirit-filled preacher, opening unimagined doors of blessing to Israel and the nations.

In the four Gospels, he appears as one of the Lord's chief lieutenants. As WHYTE explains, 'After the name of our Lord Himself, no name comes up so often in the Four Gospels as Peter's name. No disciple speaks so often and so much as Peter. Our Lord speaks oftener to Peter than to any other of His disciples; sometimes in blame and sometimes in praise. No disciple is so pointedly reproved by our Lord as Peter, and no disciple ever ventures to reprove his Master but Peter. No other disciple ever so boldly confessed and outspokenly acknowledged and encouraged our Lord as Peter repeatedly did; and no



Acts. 2. 12-13. In response, Peter preached one of the greatest sermons in church history, declaring a new epoch in the development of God's promises.

Contrary to the Jewish leaders' recent rejection of Jesus, God had now fulfilled a centuries-old prophecy by Joel, promising a new era of the Spirit that would eventually culminate in the cataclysmic events of the day of the Lord, 2. 17-21. Rather than disallow Him, the Father raised His Son from the dead and, eventually, to the glory, and declared Jesus to be both Lord and Christ, vv. 30-36. This vindication might logically be supposed to precede divine vengeance against Israel. Instead, Peter invites them to experience God's forgiveness by repenting and receiving Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. This change in their attitude towards Jesus would be indicated by their public baptism, 2. 38-41. God is so gracious that He is willing to grant complete amnesty to the actual murderers of His Son; likewise, He offers salvation to whichever sinner will receive the Lord Jesus by repentance and faith. No matter how bad one is, the Lord is ready and able to deliver from wrath and grant eternal life. Peter was privileged to proclaim this

incomparably lovely gospel on the day of the church's creation.

Using Key Number 2 at Cornelius' house

Many first-century Jews believed that God's grace was limited to Israel. They understood that Gentiles could be blessed, but only by identifying with their nation. Surely, the Almighty would not receive Gentile 'dogs'! Paul later recounted the hopeless condition of Gentiles in these words: 'Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world', Eph. 2. 11, 12. Yet the Lord showed Peter that the Old Testament boundaries between Israel and the Gentiles were being discontinued for the sake of the gospel. C. H. MACKINTOSH details the vision of the sheet's purpose, Acts 10. 10-16, saying, 'Assuredly, we may say, these were noble lessons for the apostle of the circumcision to learn upon the housetop of Simon the tanner. They were eminently calculated to soften, to expand, and elevate a mind which

had been trained amid the contracting influences of the Jewish system'.⁶

As Peter preached the gospel to Cornelius and his household, they believed, and received the Holy Spirit before the fisher of men concluded his sermon, 10. 34-46; accordingly, he instructed them to be baptized. Later, he defended his actions to the Hebrew Christians at Jerusalem by explaining it in terms of Christ's promise and what formerly transpired to Israel at Pentecost, 11. 1-18. He did not hang on to the prejudices of his past, but, instead, flung the gospel door wide open for the Gentiles. Along with Paul's Epistles, Peter's testimony at the council in Acts chapter 15 further solidified the equal standing of Gentile inclusion in the church. Consequently, Jews and Gentiles owe a great debt to this faithful apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Endnotes

- 1 Commenting on Peter's sermon at Pentecost, Acts 2. 14-40, SPURGEON said this, 'Grace, grace, thou canst prevail; thou hast done it; thou canst make use of the meanest instruments to produce the grandest effects, and to increase thy glory among men'. C. H. SPURGEON, 'Reigning Grace', in *The New Park Street Pulpit Sermons*, Vol. 6, Passmore & Alabaster, 1860, pg. 354.
- 2 PHILIP SCHAFF (ed.), *A Dictionary of the Bible: Including Biography, Natural History, Geography, Topography, Archæology, and Literature*, American Sunday-School Union, 1880, pg. 675.
- 3 J. C. RYLE, *Expository Thoughts on Matthew*, Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860, pg. 196. WHYTE summed him up in these words, 'Hasty, headlong, speaking impertinently and unadvisedly, ready to repent, ever wading into waters too deep for him, and ever turning to his Master again like a little child'. ALEXANDER WHYTE, *Bible Characters: Joseph and Mary to James, The Lord's Brother*, Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, n.d., pg. 47.
- 4 WHYTE, PG. 46.
- 5 RYLE, pg. 194. Roman Catholicism puts undue emphasis on the Lord's commissioning of Peter at Caesarea Philippi. Though prominent among the twelve, he never had authority over the other apostles, as GRAY declares, 'Such supremacy was never conferred upon him by his Master, it was never claimed by himself, and was never conceded by his associates'. JAMES M. GRAY, 'Peter, Simon' in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. James Orr et al., The Howard-Severance Company, 1915, pp. 2349-2350.
- 6 C. H. MACKINTOSH, *Genesis to Deuteronomy: Notes on the Pentateuch*, Loizeaux Brothers, 1972, pg. 358.



The submission of the wife, a submission of love, vv. 22-24

This submission is seen in a twofold way:

1) Personal, v. 22a

She is in submission to 'her own husband'. This is not church ground, where she is called 'to be under obedience, as also saith the law', 1 Cor. 14. 34.¹ Here we are confronted with family matters, and it is only to her own husband that she has a responsibility to submit. I notice that she is not called to obey, as the children are to the parents, Eph. 6. 1. Submission is a voluntary exercise to a person, whereas obedience is compulsory and indicates the position one has. Wives submit to a guiding friend; children obey a lawful commander.

2) Spiritual, v. 22b

This submission is brought onto high ground, for she brings the Lord into her marriage, and she orders her life as if it is unto the Lord. In Colossians, the submission is simply 'as it is fit in the Lord', 3. 18. When the responsibility of the wife is seen, it is so 'that the word of God be not blasphemed', Titus 2. 5. The character that the wife displays in the home is for the salvation of an unsaved husband, 1 Peter 3. 1-6. What the word of God portrays as ideal womanhood is what even an unsaved man wants to see. This was displayed in Sara who called Abraham Lord, a true expression of her heart, for scripture states that she said it 'within herself' – this is what she thought of Abraham at all times, Gen. 18. 12.

Typically, v. 23

Within a marriage there has to be one who takes responsibility for the union, and that is put firmly on the husband as he has been given the headship of the bond. Headship does not speak of superiority but of responsibility to order the home for God.

The husband is head 'even as Christ is the head of the church'. No one would dispute the place that the Lord has in relation to His own, and this is acknowledged in the union of a husband and wife. The figure continues by adding 'and he is the saviour of the body'. This has nothing

PHILEAS

PART 11

Ephesians

Chapter 5 verses 22-33

By **NORMAN MELLISH** Stoke-on-Trent, England

to do with the salvation of the soul, something that the Lord alone can accomplish, but the preservation and sustenance of the church which is in the hands of Christ. So a man is responsible to provide for, and protect his wife and family.

Devotionally, v. 24

The measure in which a wife manifests subjection is that which is seen in the subjection of the church to Christ, that is, 'in everything'. I wonder if Eve was in the mind of the Spirit when He had Paul pen these words, for, in the act of taking of the fruit, she was not subject to Adam, and it had such a devastating outcome.

The affection of the husband, a sacrifice of love, vv. 25-33

If in the wife we have the submission of love, here we have the husband's responsibility, which is the sacrifice of love. Having been married for over fifty years, I recall reading a statement by AUGUSTINE before my marriage, 'It is a man's responsibility to keep his wife's love warm'. It would seem he had these verses in mind.

The verses have a fourfold division:

- the exhortation to love, v. 25;
- the example of love, vv. 26-27;
- the exercise of love, vv. 28-29;
- the explanation of love, vv. 30-33.

The exhortation to love

The exhortation to every husband is very clear; he must love his wife. Love is not so much an emotion as an act. Love must give, as God did, who loved the world and demonstrated it in the giving of His Son. Again, a man does not love his wife for who she is, but for what she is: his wife, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. To love one's wife is obviously within the compass of every man's ability, for this is an injunction of which all are capable.

The word for love is, of course, the word that speaks of God's love, *agapao*. This is a love that has no cause and moves across every failure and folly that marks humanity. It is the love that knows no bounds or limits to its desire to be a blessing to the object of this love; it took the Lord Jesus to the cross. No man is told to exert his headship and rule over his wife, but three times he is told to love his wife, vv. 25, 28, 33.

The example of love

Could greater stress be put upon a husband as to how he must love his wife, 'even as'? Such is the love of Christ for His bride that He 'gave himself'. The word gave is *paradidomi*, which means to surrender, to yield up.

If in verse 25 we see the bride as the past object of His love, in verse 26 she is the present object of His cleansing; in verse 27 she is the future object of His glory; and, in verses 28-29, she is the constant object of His care.

We have a lovely demonstration of His giving Himself as seen in the life of Jacob, where, for Rachel, he served a total of fourteen years to make her his bride, Gen. 29.

The exercise of love

If in verse 25 we can see the example of Jacob, it is beautiful to see, in verse 26, the relationship between Boaz and Ruth, Ruth 3. Though the desire to cleanse and sanctify was on her part, here it is the Lord who fulfils the needed cleansing. In verse 27, we see Isaac with Rebekah presenting her to himself as he took her into his mother's tent and she became his wife, Gen. 24. 67.

Here we see three thoughts expressed:

- sanctification,
- presentation, and
- perfection.



1) Sanctification, v. 26

If we are to share the glories of Christ then we must be a fit companion. The word of God is to sanctify and cleanse. To sanctify is to make holy, purify, and consecrate. Whenever failure comes in to mar and sully our lives, it is because we are not taking heed to the word. The word 'cleanse' simply means to purge and make ceremonially clean.

2) Presentation, v. 27

As far as the saints are concerned, it is the Lord who will present us to Himself. In the Greek 'he' is emphatic to stress the Lord's personal action. 'The heavenly Bridegroom cleanses and sanctifies the church His bride, and then Himself presents her to Himself in the glory of immaculate beauty and unfading youth'.²

3) Perfection, v. 27

The beauty of the church will surpass anything ever seen before. Those things that mar the beauty on earth will not be seen in the church. No freckle, spot, flaw, wrinkle, and no fault or blemish, will diminish the glory that will mark the church in that day.

The exercise of love

This love is physical and personal, v. 28, while we find it both material and beneficial in verse 29. To love one's wife is to love her as a man loves himself, for this love nourishes and cherishes. It is interesting to see the stress that the apostle places

on a man's love, 'so ought'. It is set forth as a debt that is due; it is an obligation to pay. So with his wife he must seek to rear up and bring to maturity, for this is the meaning of the word 'nourish'.

He must not only take the opportunity to provide, he must also make her an object to prosper, for to cherish means to make warm, to heat, as a bird shelters its young. Does this not reveal something of the tender care a man must have for his wife?

The explanation of love

The closing section of the chapter has four prominent thoughts:

The members of Christ, v. 31

This verse emphasizes the intimacy that exists between believers and their Lord, as we are members of His body. The word always refers to the various parts of the anatomy that make up the body, and would indicate the harmony, unity, and vital necessity of every member of the body.

As Eve came out of the side of Adam, so we are united to the Lord as coming out of His death at Calvary. Yet it must be remembered that it is on resurrection ground that we are linked to Him, and that might be the implication of the expression 'of his flesh, and of his bones'. When the Lord presented Himself to the disciples after His resurrection in Luke

chapter 24, His words 'Handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have', v. 39, would bring us to resurrection ground.

The movements in marriage, v. 31

The marriage bond formed in Genesis chapter 2 verses 18-25 is the basis for all marriages, even that of Christ and His bride. As far as Eve is concerned, she was in Adam, even as we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. She came from Him, and was for Him, and was presented to Him. All this is but a reflection of the present relationship between Christ and His bride. We are now waiting only for the presentation.

In the clause 'for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother', we see how a man leaves the headship of his parents to establish his own headship in the home. The wife moves out of one sphere of headship into that of her husband.

The mystery of marriage, v. 32

The order of the original text tells us that 'this mystery is great'. There is no indication in the Genesis record that God had in mind other than the union between a man and a woman. We now discern that a far higher truth was involved in that original act of creation. The Lord looked down the ages to see a bride He was going to purchase for Himself, making them one flesh. That is the great mystery.

The apostle, having elevated the marriage bond to recognize the divine union that has been formed, does not want his hearers to forget the true relationship that now exists between a man and a woman. Nor does he want the dual responsibilities to be overlooked. As a result, he begins, 'nevertheless'; we might say 'however'. If believers were to follow the principles laid down and the pattern left by the Saviour, there would not be the moral breakdown of so many marriages that is so evident in our day.

Endnotes

- 1 When in assembly, she owns the headship of every man.
- 2 J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, *St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, James Clarke, n.d., pg. 125.





WISER THAN

'What am I?' is a basic question that Christians could answer in many ways: a believer, a saint, a disciple, a soldier, an athlete, a witness, a steward, to name but a few. How do I feel I am progressing in these areas? How is my faith developing? Am I living a sanctified life? How well am I following, fighting, running, witnessing, and administrating my stewardship? One key element to living a productive Christian life is self-discipline. Although a believer's goal of pleasing the Lord is diametrically opposed to that of worldly businessmen, nonetheless, many of the habits required of Christians are currently employed by high achieving entrepreneurs. We notice, for example, that in the world truly successful people recognize that if they are going to reach the top they must take things seriously.¹ In this paper we consider seven principles that can be applied to the Christian life, that are often seen in secular businesses. Let it never be said of us that 'the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light', Luke 16. 8.

By **MICHAEL BUCKERIDGE** Grantham, England and **JEREMY GIBSON** Derby

me to live is Christ', Phil. 1. 21. His writings are permeated with the language of self-sacrifice and total commitment.² Unswervingly, he eyed the ultimate prize, 'the glory which shall be revealed in us', Rom 8. 19. All Christians should ask themselves how committed they are to the Lord.

Physical health: 'know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?' 1 Cor. 6. 19

Believers should, by keeping their bodies healthy, actively seek to optimize their life expectancy, and maximise their capacity to serve. This includes sensible eating, exercising regularly, and not smoking, or drinking alcohol excessively. Obesity (body mass index ≥ 30) increases the risk of type 2 diabetes mellitus, which can affect vision, mobility, kidney function, etc.³ Smoking causes around 29% of all cancer deaths. In the UK 15,000-22,000 deaths per year are associated with alcohol abuse. It is currently recommended that adults exercise more than thirty minutes daily for five or more days each week, which reduces the risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer, etc.

The fact that 'your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost', 6. 19, also demands sexual purity, because 'every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body', 6. 18. As well as risking sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies, and emotional upset, sexual sin has a profound, immeasurable effect on the human body, see Job 20. 11.

While many believers are racked by pain and disease, or experience the activity limitations of old age, those who are able should strive to have holy bodies, free from sexual indiscretions, and healthy bodies, in which they can serve Christ.

Time consciousness: 'redeeming the time', Eph. 5. 16

Every day contains 1,440 minutes. In

5,256,000 minutes, you will be ten years older! Successful people know that every minute counts.

Scripture repeatedly tells us of the shortness and fragility of life: it is as a 'tale that is told', Ps. 90. 9; 'a handbreadth,' 39. 5; 'a vapour', Jas. 4. 14. Given that our lives are 'soon cut off', the psalmist prayed for God to 'teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom', Ps. 90. 10, 12. Conscious of the prevailing evil and sensing that unbelievers watch Christians, Paul exhorted the Ephesians and Colossians to buy up each opportunity, Eph. 5. 16; Col. 4. 5 Amplified.⁴ How can we expect the world to pay heed to our urgent message, that 'now is the accepted time', 2 Cor. 6. 2, if they see us frittering away our days? As Fredrick Bhaer warned Jo March in *Little Women*, 'A writer once said that he would give the world the little things it wanted and then he would do his great work, but the world wanted more and more of the little things and so the great work never got done'.

Meetings can be a waste of time. Someone has said you should only have a meeting if someone is going to sign you a cheque at the end! While we would not be so mercenary, it is a challenge to us whether our meetings are 'profitable', or just part of a routine that we go through which fools us into thinking that we are busy in the Lord's things.

Sufficient recuperation: 'rest a while', Mark 6. 31

True Christianity demands a measured balance between rigour and rest. Too much rigour, and sharp instruments are blunted through overuse. Too much rest, and nothing will be done. While the New Testament depicts Christians as courageous, unflinching soldiers, totally committed to their warfare, Eph. 6. 13; 2 Tim. 2. 4, and highly disciplined athletes, 1 Cor. 9. 24-27; 2 Tim. 2. 5, it balances this robust intensity with the need for rest. After busy public service, the Lord Jesus exhorted His disciples, 'Come ye yourselves apart into a

Single-mindedness: 'one thing have I desired', Ps. 27. 4

Recently, at a school sports presentation, the guest speaker explained that to achieve sporting success we need to 'find our passion', 'be willing to sacrifice' and 'have a will to work hard'; everything else in life needs to be measured in the light of our sporting dream. This same single-minded resolve is required in the Christian life. With evil being the 'violation of purpose' we must first of all grasp why we are here, and then, with dogged determination, pursue it. As SUZANNA WESLEY explained, 'Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off your relish of spiritual things . . . is sin' and must be avoided.

The Apostle Paul was so devoted to Christ that he wrote, 'For to



THE WORLD

by, England

desert place, and rest a while', Mark 6. 31. Having preached till midnight, and then resurrected Eutychus, Paul walked alone from Troas to Assos, while his companions took ship, Acts 20. 13. In the Old Testament, as a skilful shepherd, Jacob understood the disastrous consequences of overdriving a flock, Gen. 33. 13. Moses' father-in-law counselled him to delegate; otherwise, 'thou wilt surely wear away', Exod. 18. 18. Following his dramatic showdown on Mount Carmel, threatened, exhausted and down-cast, Elijah needed sleep and food, 1 Kgs. 19. 5-8. Living for Christ is the Christian's all-consuming passion. But intense labour without rest leads to burnout. The best athletes build rest periods into their intense training schedules. The most successful people take time out to sharpen their saw, cp. Eccles. 10. 10.⁵ Cultivating a wholesome, relaxing hobby, which is not overly time-consuming, may increase a believer's efficiency.

Watchful anticipation: 'foreseeth the evil', Prov. 22. 3

Christians face many dangers. Some spring up unexpectedly; others may be mitigated through careful planning and circumspect living, Eph. 5. 15. By horizon scanning for potential pitfalls, with a firm grasp of the principles of godly living, believers can seek to avoid prospective temptations. The total abstinence from alcohol prevents drunkenness, which is a sin, Eph. 5. 18. Christians should think carefully about their career path: will it demand so much that nothing will be left for Christ? Might it eventually call for the disregard of biblical standards? The history of the Old Testament kings proves that a man's wife can make or break him spiritually. Young Christian men and women should choose spouses who will support them spiritually, and be committed to the upbringing of children in the fear of God. As 'godliness with contentment is great gain', 1 Tim. 6. 6, go with little, rather than accruing debt, which can lead to personal stress, placing tension on relationships and

distracting from the things of God. 'Owe no man any thing', Rom. 13. 8. If married, shun being away from home overnight, which increases the risk of marital infidelity, 1 Cor. 7. 3-5.

Temptation cannot be eliminated. As a 'fifth column', the fleshly nature is ever active in a believer's heart. But, if at all possible, 'a prudent man foreseeeth the evil, and hideth himself', Prov. 22. 3.

Careful documentation: 'bring . . . the books', 2 Tim. 4. 13

After interpreting his dream, Joseph asked the butler to 'make mention of . . . [him] unto Pharaoh', Gen. 40. 14. But once restored to his position, the butler did not 'remember Joseph, but forgot him', Gen. 40. 23. What a poignant example of human forgetfulness! Knowing how quickly men forget, after Joshua's victory over Amalek, 'the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book', Exod. 17. 14. On entering the Promised Land, and settling in houses, Israel was expected to write God's words 'upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates', Deut. 11. 20. When the nation finally had a king, he was to 'write him a copy of this law in a book . . . that he may learn to fear the Lord his God', Deut. 17. 18, 19. Imprisoned, and awaiting execution, the apostle Paul requested Timothy to 'bring . . . the books, but especially the parchments', 2 Tim. 4. 13. Here are a few things believers might find helpful to write down. Record the names of people we meet, and have detailed prayer lists. When preparing for the Lord's Supper, write out, in a structured way, thoughts about Christ. And, when preaching, construct accurate sermon notes, filing them carefully afterwards for future enlargement and development.

Self-restraint: 'buffet my body', 1 Cor. 9. 27 NASB

Self-discipline is tough, but, in the world, if the prize is big enough, or the expectation great enough, it is practised.

The Lord Jesus taught radical self-discipline with the words, 'if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out', Matt. 5. 29. Paul was no less severe when he wrote, 'Mortify [put to death] therefore your members that are upon the earth', Col. 3. 5. We can take some simple steps to protect ourselves from many temptations. For example, turning telephones off to prevent distraction during our quiet times, or putting in place some form of accountability for our internet browsing. The expectation of the steward is that he will be faithful, 1 Cor. 4. 2, the disciple that he will follow, Luke 14. 27, the soldier that he will endure hardness and be separate from the things of this life, 2 Tim. 2. 4, the athlete that he be temperate, 1 Cor. 9. 25. But for what? An incorruptible crown, 1 Cor. 9. 25, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, Phil. 3. 14, a crown of righteousness, 2 Tim. 4. 8, and, quite simply, that we might please Him who has chosen us, 2. 4. With 'so great a cloud of witnesses', Heb. 12. 1, surrounding us and cheering us home, may we 'lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us', and 'run with patience the race that is set before us'.

Endnotes

- 1 See TRAVIS BRADBERRY, *Critical Things Ridiculously Successful People Do Every Day*.
- 2 Rom. 12. 2; 2 Cor. 4. 8-9; 11. 23-27; Phil. 3. 8; 2 Tim. 4. 6.
- 3 Figures taken from *Oxford Handbook of General Practice* Fourth Edition, Oxford University Press, 2014.
- 4 See Strong's Number G1805, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*
- 5 S. COVEY, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Simon & Schuster UK, Reprinted 2004.





This article is part of an ongoing study. The writer's intention is to look at each phrase and statement in the letter and to glean a simple understanding of what Paul was writing to Titus about. It might be helpful to read the previous articles either in the printed edition of the magazine or online via www.preciousseed.org.



By **STEPHEN G. BAKER** Liverpool, England

There are three simple ways of dividing this, the third and final chapter of the epistle. I have noted these below.

The behaviour of the church to the world, Titus 3. 1-11
The conclusion of the letter, Titus 3. 12-15

What we were before salvation, Titus 3. 1-3
What we are after salvation, Titus 3. 4-8
Giving closing guidance, Titus 3. 9-15

The principles of holy living, Titus 3. 1-4
The details of sound doctrine, Titus 3. 5-11
Concluding comments and a benediction, Titus 3. 12-15

I will be looking at each verse in turn and will follow the third suggested division of the chapter.

The principles of holy living, vv. 1-4

Good citizenship and the delegated power of politicians, v. 1.

In the New Testament, Christians are explicitly taught that they are to respect and obey the government and civil authorities of the countries where they live. Peter writes in 1 Peter chapter 3, that believers should submit to every human authority. Obedience in this respect is not negotiable, we should respect and obey all authority from the most senior figure in government right down to those who hold offices of state in a delegated capacity. They have to be obeyed, unless they are forcing Christians to disobey the word of God – justification for that viewpoint would take another article to explain. Please note that when Paul is writing to the

saints in Rome, he reminds them that governing authorities ultimately get their mandate from God, 13. 1.

In the first verse, Paul asks Titus to tell the believers in Crete to submit to the government and its officers. Remember that the expression 'to be subject to' has the idea of order and respect as well as the following instruction to be obedient. The natural inclination of the people of Crete would have been very different to this, as we noted in an earlier article. Salvation changes behaviour as well as beliefs.

Paul not only warns Christians against fighting the authorities but he encourages them to be ready for every good work. If a crisis occurs, then Christians should be ready to help in any way they can. The idea isn't that of regularly being involved in your community – I think we have other verses which teach that we should be good neighbours and actively do good works – but the point is that we should be ready to help when a need arises.

Radical Christianity in the Community, v. 2.

It is very important that a believer is not known for being a critic and speaking derisively about people. It is a shameful thing when people damage other people's reputation by gossiping and talking about things that are none of their business. Christians should avoid this type of behaviour. Their words should be kind, they should be peaceable, gentle and not involved in squabbles and quarrels. The Lord Jesus taught that peacemakers are blessed, Matt. 5. 9. This verse is teaching that believers should be known for their complete courtesy to all people. When we fail to behave like this we are demonstrating a lack of humility and understanding of what salvation is about. This was radical teaching, especially to people who by nature were lazy, violent, and liars!

What we were by Nature, v. 3

The phrase 'we were once' is very significant. Paul also teaches this truth

to the Christians in Corinth. After cataloguing the type of sinners in the city, he ends the list by saying 'and such were some of you', 1 Cor. 6. 11. It may sound incredible but conversion changes people radically! The believers in Crete were once foolish, disobedient, misled and enslaved to various passions and desires. Sin has a power that traps people and brings them under its control. They had been the slaves of sin, Rom. 6. 17, but they were now free. Their lives had been full of evil (malice) and envy (jealousy), full of hate and hating one another. The change because of salvation was dramatic.

Sometimes we need to be reminded of what we once were! This should make us appreciate what God has done in our conversion. It is astounding what God does when He saves a soul. Paul writes to the church at Rome, 'But now being made free from sin, and become servants [slaves] to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life', Rom. 6. 22.

The Reason for the Change, v. 4.

Change normally has a catalyst! Life doesn't get automatically better, and people don't break old habits easily. God intervened in human history, and the effect on those who believe is dramatic. This verse describes God as a Saviour God, a God of revelation, a God of goodness and kindness, and a God who is interested in and acts kindly towards humanity. He is also a God of love, and, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, He is revealed as such.





from Titus (Part Nine)

You could read verses 4 and 5 as follows: 'But . . . he saved us'. The other phrases define what God does in contrast to what we do not do in the matter of conversion.

The details of sound doctrine, vv. 5-11

Saved by Grace, v. 5a.

This passage is similar to Ephesians chapter 2. It would be useful to compare both passages. The main point is that salvation is not because of what we have done. Our works did not contribute to our salvation. This is made crystal clear in each passage. The best we do does not add anything to our salvation. Salvation is 'not by works of righteousness which we have done'. The grace of God means that salvation is 'not of works, lest any man should boast', Eph. 2. 9.

From a positive perspective, salvation is 'according to his mercy'. God's mercy is a pool from which salvation flows. It was a very personal thing for God to do this for us. In the ages to come God will demonstrate, 'the exceeding riches of his grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus', v. 7. This describes the outflowing of God's mercy towards those who believe.

New Life and New Power, v. 5b.

Two things happened to bring about conversion. The 'washing of regeneration' and the 'renewing of the Holy Spirit'. Both are the work of God in the life of an individual. The cleansing power of the new birth took place and the moral renewal of the Holy Spirit was effective.

The new birth has not only brought us into the family of God, but it has dealt with the past. Our sins were washed away and we were born of God, John 3. 5. The new birth is described as washing, or a bath. This is like the picture the Lord Jesus used of conversion in chapter 13 verse 10. He taught Peter that he had been washed, or had a bath at conversion, but that he needed daily cleansing from defilement. It is the same picture of moral cleansing by the word of God as described in chapter 15 verse 3. So, the new birth deals with our sins and brings us into the family of God.

The renewing of, or by the Holy Spirit, is an act at conversion which affects our future. The new birth and new life are the work of the Spirit of God. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'old things are passed away; behold all things are become new', 2 Cor. 5. 17. WILLIAM MACDONALD in his commentary talks about 'not putting new clothes on an old man, but putting a new man in the clothes'.¹ I think that expresses it well.

The Holy Spirit in Conversion, v. 6.

It is significant that the words that are used to describe the Spirit in relation to the believer are all superlatives. The Spirit was poured out abundantly. The idea seems to be that we received the Spirit in full measure. Interestingly, this was at the instruction of Jesus Christ our Saviour. He, Jesus Christ, is the means by which this was possible. Incidentally, all the members of the Godhead were involved in our conversion – 'God our Saviour' in verse 4, the 'renewing of the Holy Spirit' in

verse 5, and 'shed on us . . . through Jesus Christ our Saviour' in verse 6. The truth of the trinity is also taught elsewhere in the New Testament.²

Heirs with Christ, v. 7.

The outcome of all this activity at conversion is that we 'have been justified by his grace'. The grace of God has been discussed previously but here we are reminded that the grace of God has justified us. The truth of justification is that we have been acquitted of any guilt that we had before God. As a result, we are righteous, right with God, and have become heirs with the confident expectation of eternal life.

Justification is a big subject and one that is worth considering carefully. This article is not the place to do this. Paul wrote a detailed explanation of this truth to the church in Rome and the churches of Galatia.³

Justification (or salvation) by grace has been explained in the earlier verses of this chapter. Paul is emphasizing in this verse that 'being justified' we have become heirs. In other words, we can be confident that we will inherit eternal life. The word 'hope' in the New Testament conveys the idea of certainty. It is something that we can be sure will happen at some stage in the future. Again, a visit to Romans chapter 8 will confirm this to be the case.

In verse 8, Paul makes a classic statement – 'this is a faithful saying'. Titus will be required to emphasize the veracity of the previous truths that Paul has been teaching and to make it clear to the believers that doctrine must be converted into practice. We will deal with this in more detail in the final article of this series.

Endnotes

- 1 WILLIAM MACDONALD, *Believers Bible Commentary*, Titus 3. 5.
- 2 Luke 1. 35; Rom. 14. 17, 18; 2 Cor. 13. 14.
- 3 In Romans chapter 8 verse 33 we are taught that, 'it is God that justifies'. In chapter 5 verse 1 we discover that we are justified by faith. Chapter 3 verse 24 states that we are justified 'by his grace' and Chapter 3 verse 26 explains that we are justified by believing in Jesus. The basis of our justification is established in chapter 5 verse 9 as being 'by His [the Lord Jesus'] blood'.





WILL I BE A WINNER OR A LOSER AT THE BEMA? PART 2

Continued from Part 1, published in August 2017

By JOHN GRIFFITHS Port Talbot, Wales

7. THE SETTLEMENT – Why?

Remorse and Regret

'Suffer loss'. The *bēma* is not just a prize giving; wrongs will be righted. Scriptures that teach this are (emphasis mine):

- 'Look to yourselves, that we **lose not** those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward', 2 John 8;
- 'Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man **take** thy crown', Rev. 3. 11;
- 'Unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be **taken away**', Luke 19. 26;
- 'and not be **ashamed** before him at his coming', 1 John 2. 28;
- 'blameless', equals, 'without **reproof**', 1 Cor. 1. 8;
- '**suffer loss**', as the fire consumes the materials, 1 Cor. 3. 15;
- 'Knowing, therefore, the terror [**awesomeness**] of the Lord', 2 Cor. 5. 11;
- 'lest . . . when I have preached to others, I myself should be a **castaway**', i.e., disapproved for reward, 1 Cor. 9. 27;
- 'And if a man also strive for masteries, **yet is he not crowned**, except he strive lawfully', i.e., within the rules governing the event, 2 Tim. 2. 5;
- 'Take heed that ye do not your alms [**good deeds**] before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have **no reward** of your Father which is in heaven', Matt. 6. 1;
- 'But he that **doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong** . . . done; and there is no respect of persons', Col. 3. 23-25;

- 'Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they which must give account, that they may do it with joy, and **not with grief**: for that is **unprofitable** for you', Heb. 13. 17.

Recompense and Reward

'My reward is with me'. Six ways of expressing reward are to be seen:

- 1 'Behold, I come quickly and my **reward** is with me', Rev 22. 12. This reward is payment for work done whether good or bad;
- 2 'I press towards the mark for **the prize** of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus', Phil. 3. 14. The reward is seen by Paul as a prize to be won.
- 3 'the Lord come . . . and then shall every man [**one**] have **praise** of God', 1 Cor. 4. 5. The reward is described not only as payment and a prize, but in terms of praise received of God, for example, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord', Matt. 25. 21-23;
- 4 'And cast their **crowns** before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord', Rev. 4. 10, 11. The New Testament speaks of reward in terms of crowns awarded. Ultimately, the crown is cast before the throne, for only Christ is worthy to receive honour. Five crowns are recorded. They are not diademata, or royal crowns, but those given to overcomers – to the victorious, the *stephanos*.

An incorruptible crown for self-control of the old man, 1 Cor. 9. 25;

- a) A crown of righteousness for lovers of the second coming of Christ, 2 Tim. 4. 8;
- b) A crown of life for suffering trials and martyrdom, Jas. 1. 12; Rev. 2. 10;

- c) A crown of unfading glory for shepherding the flock, 1 Pet. 5. 4;
- d) A crown of rejoicing for the soul winner, 1 Thess. 2. 19.

- 5 Reward is further treated as a capacity to display God's glory by the degree of light that emanates from our glorified bodies. A cameo of this is seen on the Mount of Transfiguration when Christ radiated light from His person. 'And they that be wise [**teachers**] shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness [**evangelists**] as the stars for ever and ever', Dan. 12. 3. 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father', Matt. 13. 43. 'For one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead', 1 Cor. 15. 40-42;
- 6 Reward is demonstrated by cooperation with Christ in His millennial rule. 'And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing, that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ', Col. 3. 23, 24; 'Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord', Matt. 25. 21, 23; 'Occupy till I come. Then came the first . . . have thou authority over ten cities . . . and the second came . . . Be thou also over five cities', Luke 19. 16-19. Under the rule of Christ we will have responsibility over cities. The number of those cities depends on our faithfulness to Christ during our Christian life here and now, whether it be ten or five or whatever.

The challenge to every believer remains; will I be a winner or a loser at the *bēma*? Will I be saved by the skin of my teeth or will I gain an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom?



RUTH

By **JOHN SCARSBROOK** Killamarsh, England

The book of Judges ends in failure, departure, idolatry and judgement. The first book of Samuel opens with a barren woman, a priest whose eyes were dim and an admission of 'no open vision'; heaven was silent. Between these two books comes the delightful story of Ruth. Only eighty-five verses, mostly dialogue, yet very precious and intensely practical in its application; a welcome oasis after trudging through the wilderness of chapters 17 to 21 of the book of Judges.

The book of Ruth shows that however dark the day, God has a faithful remnant that He can use. We maybe think of men like Noah, Elijah and Malachi, but in the dark days of the judges there was a Boaz, a man faithful during times of famine and prepared of God to be used in Messiah's genealogy. In fact, the book has an important place in the continuing progress of that plan which would come to fruition 'when the fulness of the time was come'.

The book could also be seen to have a dispensational aspect, as the dealings of God with the nation of Israel are seen in Elimelech and Naomi. The Gentiles are brought into blessing in Ruth and a foreshadowing of the Kinsman-redeemer in Boaz.

There are practical lessons seen in the lives of the characters brought before us. In Orpah there is a warning for the unbeliever, brought so close, yet, at the last, turning back. For the new believer, there is the uncomplicated faith of Ruth. The backsliding believer is characterized by Elimelech, the restored believer in Naomi, and the spiritual believer in Boaz.

The narrative takes place 'in the days when the judges ruled' and, in such days, we are not surprised to read that 'there was a famine in the land'. This was one of the signs of God's displeasure with His people, though we cannot isolate the events of the book of Ruth to any particular period of time in the book of Judges. Suffice it to say, there were many times when the Lord had to chastise the nation

for their persistent rebellion. There was but one condition of blessing and that was obedience, a lesson they, and often we, fail to appreciate.

The four chapters divide the book very conveniently. GEOFFREY BULL in his commentary on Ruth, *Love Song in Harvest*, places the chapters under very appropriate headings, as follows:

- 'Chapter 1 – Ten years in Moab
- Chapter 2 – A day in the harvest field
- Chapter 3 – A night in the threshing floor
- Chapter 4 – An hour in the city gate'.

In chapter 1 we are introduced to a family in Beth-lehem-judah. It is well known that Bethlehem means 'house of bread', yet now we read of a famine, in view of which, the family left Bethlehem and journeyed to Moab. That may have seemed a very pragmatic move in the circumstances, but, as has often been pointed out, Elimelech's name means 'my God is king', his name proclaims it, but his actions denied it. It was Boaz, whose name means 'in him is strength', who lived up to his name and not only stayed, but prospered during those famine years.

The lesson we learn from these opening verses is that the decisions made by Elimelech as a husband and father had a dramatic and unexpected effect upon his family. There is no recorded word spoken by Elimelech, but his actions reveal his heart and, as another has recorded, he went to Moab to live – and he died; he intended that his family should prosper and they all but perished. He went to Moab to preserve a name – and lost it. He lived in the land of famine, but died in the fields of plenty. His actions may have denied the meaning of his name, but his grave confirms it.

At some point during the ten years in Moab, Elimelech and Naomi's two sons, Mahlon and Chilion took Moabite wives, Ruth and Orpah, in breach of the Sinaitic law. Heaven's displeasure was evident, when,

not only did the marriages remain childless, but the two sons followed their father to the grave.

The remaining verses of chapter 1 focus upon Naomi's decision to return to Bethlehem and the consequent actions of her daughters-in-law. Both girls weighed up the options and made a choice. Orpah turned and walked back to her people and her gods, firmly closing the door on any opportunity for salvation. Ruth, on the other hand, acknowledged her love for Naomi and, with a moving expression of fidelity, chose to stay with her mother-in-law.

The words of Ruth have echoed through the years as an unparalleled statement of devotion and loyalty. A. NAISMITH in his *Twelve Hundred Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes*, sums up Ruth's words in memorable fashion:

- 'She found a new path for her feet;
- A new place for her home;
- A new people for her friends;
- A new power for her life;
- A new prospect for her future'.

She ended with what was, in effect, a binding oath: 'The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me', v. 17. There was nothing more to be said. 'So they two went until they came to Bethlehem', v. 19.

The events of chapter 2 centre upon the harvest field and we are introduced to Boaz, the 'mighty man of wealth' from Bethlehem, the owner of the field, a lovely picture of 'the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy', 1 Tim. 6. 17.

In order to provide some means of sustenance for herself and Naomi, Ruth offers to go and find a neighbouring farmer in whose harvest field she may be allowed to glean. The law¹ gave instruction to landowners that in harvesting their crops, they were not to 'make clean riddance of the corners of the fields' that some provision may be left for the poor, the stranger, the

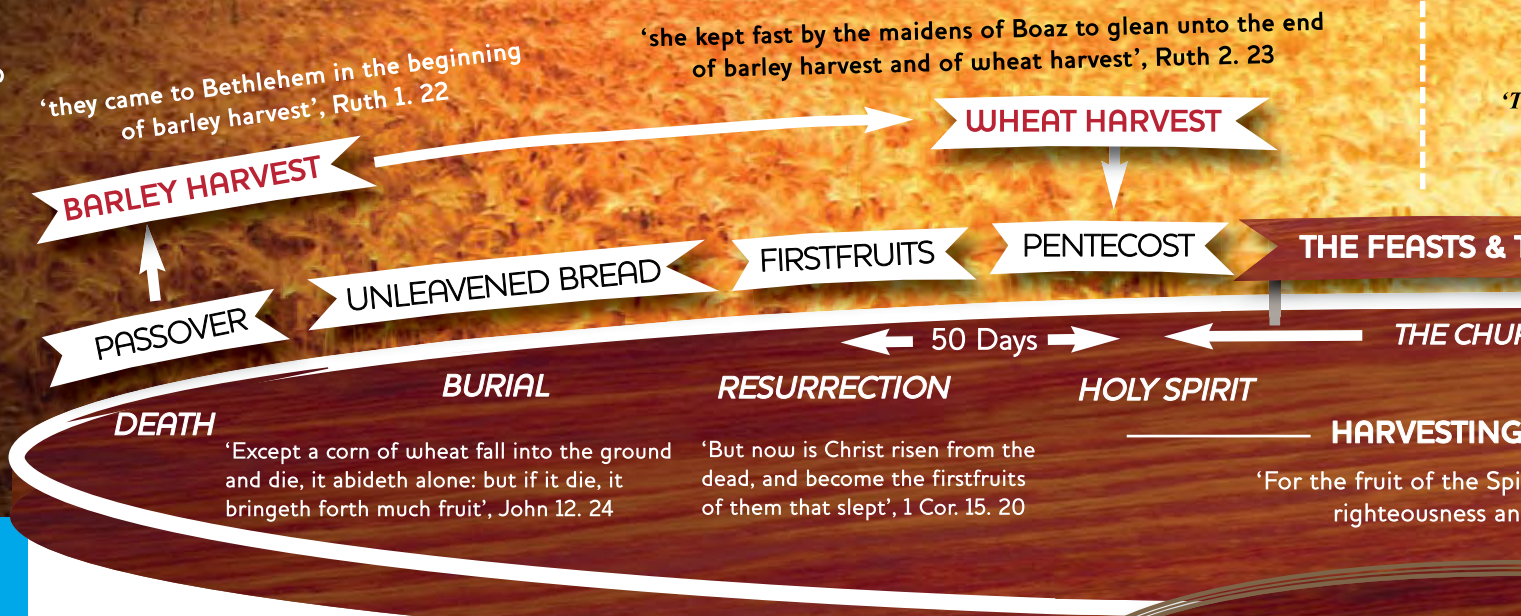
CHARTING THE SCRIPTURES RUTH by Jonathan Black

'Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled', Ruth 1. 1

10 comparisons of Boaz's field in Ruth 2 and the local church as a 'tilled field'.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Go to the field, v. 2 | 'ye are God's husbandry', 1 Cor. 3. |
| 2. Gleaning in the field, v. 2 | 'we are labourers together with God', 1 Cor. 3. |
| 3. Grace in the field, v. 2 | 'According to the grace of God which is given unto me', 1 Cor. 3. |
| 4. Guidance to the field, v. 3 | 'the Spirit of God dwelleth in you', 1 Cor. 3. |
| 5. Gathering unto his name, v. 3 | 'gathered together unto my name', Matt. 18. |
| 6. God in the field, v. 4 | 'God that giveth the increase', 1 Cor. 3. |
| 7. Guarding the field, v. 5 | 'the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers', Acts 20. |
| 8. Behaviour in the field, v. 9 | 'Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded', Titus 2. |
| 9. Reward in the field, v. 12 | 'he shall receive a reward', 1 Cor. 3. |
| 10. Table in the field, v. 14 | 'ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table', 1 Cor. 10. |

The book of Judges



6 Outlines of Ruth:

1) A NEW CONVERT

- Ch 1 - Ruth seeking God by faith
- Ch 2 - Ruth serving God in the field
- Ch 3 - Ruth seeking God at His feet
- Ch 4 - Ruth satisfied by God through His fame

2) RUTH AS A TYPE OF THE CHURCH

- Ch 1 - A Gentile bride - the church salvation by faith
- Ch 2 - A Gentile bride - the church saved by grace
- Ch 3 - A Gentile bride - the church secure through redemption
- Ch 4 - A Gentile bride - the church satisfied with its inheritance

3) BOAZ AS A TYPE OF THE CHRIST

- Ch 1 - Boaz - the rejected King - Matthew
- Ch 2 - Boaz - the perfect servant - Mark
- Ch 3 - Boaz - the perfect man - Luke
- Ch 4 - Boaz - the beloved Son - John

Restoration & in the days of

'Why have I found grace in thine eyes, the seeing I am a stranger'

New Testament reference

'And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and

Christ and redemption

'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, which is not by works, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once for all into the world, and offered himself a ransom for all, that by this we might be redeemed. And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal life.'

'Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together'.

'Thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance', Ruth 4. 5

Responsibility of the Goel

Heb. Goel kinsman, kinsman-redeemer)

1) Persons - Leviticus 25. 48

Buy back a family member from slavery
Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people', Luke 1. 68

2) Possessions - Leviticus 25. 25

Redeem a field if the family had to sell it
It is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory', Eph. 1. 14

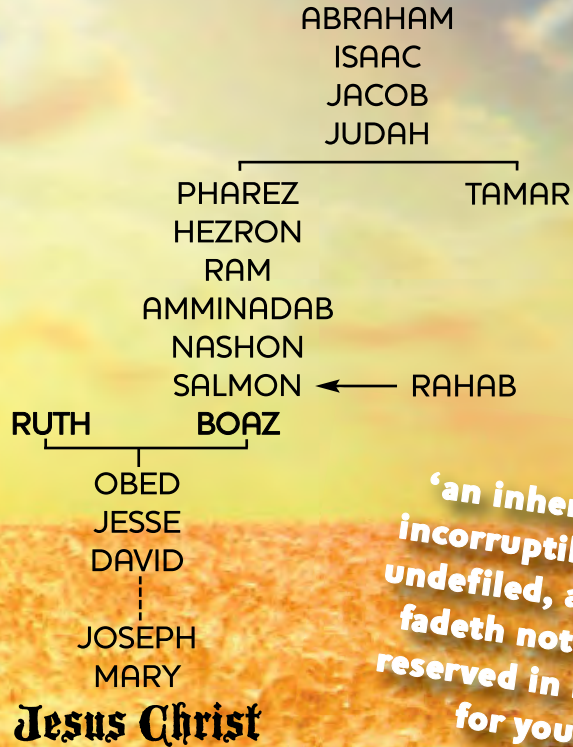
3) Pursuit - Numbers 35. 19

Pursue the killer of a family member for justice
Through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil', Heb. 2. 14

4) Posterity - Deuteronomy 25. 5

Raise up a child for a dead relative
To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons', Gal. 4. 5

Ruth in the generation of Jesus Christ



'an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you'.



Redemption of the Judges

'But thou shouldest take knowledge of me, O Lord thy God, when thou art angry?' Ruth 2. 10

References to Ruth

Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king', Matt. 1. 5-6

Redemption

Redemption from the power of sins, according to the riches of his grace', Eph. 1. 7

Redemption into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us', Heb. 9. 12

Redemption for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament,

Redemption of eternal inheritance', Heb. 9. 15

4) RUTH AS A TYPE OF FELLOWSHIP

- Ch 1 - The fellowship of God - Seeking his people
- Ch 2 - The fellowship in the field - Sitting at his table
- Ch 3 - The fellowship at his feet - Searching his word
- Ch 4 - The fellowship of the Son - Serving with the Son

5) NAOMI AS A TYPE OF ISRAEL RESTORED

- Ch 1 - Israel's rejection of God as King
- Ch 2 - Israel's return to God through His word
- Ch 3 - Israel's redemption by God through the Gentile bride
- Ch 4 - Israel's restoration to God through the Son

6) REDEMPTION OF THE INHERITANCE & NAME

- Ch 1 - The Gospel of Redemption - The provision in Bethlehem
- Ch 2 - The Grace for Redemption - The person called Boaz
- Ch 3 - The 'Goel' for Redemption - The provision of the barley
- Ch 4 - The Generations of Redemption - The purchase of the bride

But first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn', Matt. 13. 30



fatherless and the widow. It was for those less fortunate in society, or who had fallen upon hard-times yet who were prepared to make the effort to engage in the menial task of gleaning.

Seemingly by chance, v. 3, Ruth found herself in the part of the field which belonged to Boaz. But what may have seemed like an occasion of good fortune was, in reality, the sovereignty of God which is seen throughout the book, providing us, in chapter 4, with a vital link in the genealogy of Messiah.

The balance of the chapter is taken up with four short passages of dialogue:

Boaz and his servant, vv. 5-7;
Boaz and Ruth, vv. 8-14;
Boaz and the reapers, vv. 15-16;
Ruth and Naomi, vv. 17-23.

It is important that we do not view the events of chapter 3 in the context of Western society and culture. If we do then, at best, Ruth's actions would seem presumptuous, and, at worst, bordering on immorality. We need to refer back to Leviticus chapter 25 and Deuteronomy chapter 25 to appreciate the law concerning inheritance and the continuation of a family name in Israel.

It was made clear to the nation that although the land had been made wholly available to them for their blessing, they could not do as they liked with it, as the Lord had said, 'the land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine', Lev. 25. 23. However, given circumstances such as Naomi found herself in, provision was made within the law for a kinsman, a relative or family member, to purchase the land and this was referred to as redeeming it, paying the price to set the land free from the previous owner.

Likewise, if a man died with no heir to succeed him, it was his brother's responsibility to marry the widowed sister-in-law and raise a family to inherit his brother's land and carry on the family name. Again, we perceive the sovereignty of God overruling in this family. If only Mahlon had died in

Moab, then Chilion would have been expected to raise a family with Ruth, Boaz would never have come into the frame and the purposes of God with regard to Messiah's genealogy would have been frustrated or at best required revision. So Chilion had to be removed as well! We say with the apostle Paul, 'How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out', Rom. 11. 33.

Ruth, with all humility and modesty, waited until the workers and those celebrating the in-gathered harvest had dispersed. She had taken note of the place where Boaz lay and now she came softly. There was no presumption in her approach, not that she was ashamed, but she did not want to embarrass Boaz in any way. Lifting the cover from his feet, she lay down. It was an act of dependence, of submission and of trust, or, to bring it into a New Testament expression, here was faith, hope and love.

Having unexpectedly discovered Ruth lying at his feet, Boaz made known to her that he was aware of her circumstances and was prepared to undertake the responsibility of a kinsman. He realized, however, that account would need to be taken of the nearer kinsman's claim.

The scene changes again in chapter 4 and all attention is on Boaz as he

makes his way to the gate, with the work of redemption on his heart. Beautiful character that Ruth was, virtuous, loyal and kind, she still needed a redeemer. How many there are who live upright, honest lives, yet still need to be born again.

Three qualifications were needed for one to be a redeemer for another. He must be a **near kinsman**, he must have the **ability** to redeem and he must have the **willingness** to redeem. Our Kinsman-redeemer, the Lord Jesus fulfilled every required condition to accomplish our redemption

It was the third of these conditions which provided an insurmountable difficulty for the nearer kinsman. If it had been a daughter of Israel, then maybe some solution could be found; but a Moabitess? After all, he had his own family to think about. His decision was made, he saw no bargaining room; his answer was clear, 'I cannot redeem it'. In reality, it was not his inability to pay the price, but his unwillingness to take Ruth into his house.

The transaction completed, Boaz confirmed the terms of the contract and received the approval and blessing of all present. The nearer kinsman, who thought that by refusing the offer he would preserve his name, passes off the page of history, nameless and forgotten. For the last time, in verse 10, Ruth is referred to as 'the Moabitess'. Now, in coming in to the house of Boaz, she is just Ruth, v. 13. The past is gone; Moab with all its associations is remembered no more. That is the fruit of redemption.

The closing verses give a brief, but important, genealogy leading up to David. Matthew takes up the line from David the king through Solomon and Luke traces back to David through another son, Nathan, so establishing, without question, the right of the child born, the Son given, to sit upon the throne of His father David.

Endnote

- 1 Lev. 19. 9; 23. 22;
Deut. 24. 19.





A WORD FOR TODAY

Mashabbim (Places of drawing water)

Mashah (Anointing)

Mashah (Draw)

Most office holders today are usually appointed without a great deal of ceremony. But this was not the case in Old Testament times where those who were appointed as prophets, priests, and kings were subject to what STEPHEN RENN describes as the 'theologically significant phenomenon of anointing'.¹ This formal anointing ritual involved the use of sacred oil made from various spices, Exod. 25. 6, to consecrate an individual to the service of God and thereby confirm fitness for the office, e.g., Exod. 28. 41. The Hebrew verb *mashah* is used in the Old Testament to describe the actual process of anointing, and the related word *mashiah* is used to describe the person who has been anointed ('the anointed one'). A second derivative of *mashah* is the restricted term *mishhah*, which refers to the actual anointing oil used in the formal anointing ceremony;² the verb is used both generally and technically in the Old Testament. Eastern culture set great store on the custom of anointing individuals, either on the head or the body, with some form of oil. It is recorded of Ruth that prior to her meeting with Boaz at the threshing floor, she was instructed by Naomi to bathe and then anoint herself ('perfume yourself', Ruth 3. 3. NIV). Anointing would also be regarded as a mark of respect towards an honoured guest, hence David's comments in Psalm 23 verse 5, and why our Lord took such great exception to the lack of courtesy shown by Simon the Pharisee in Luke chapter 7 verse 46. On the other hand, it was inappropriate to anoint with oil when in mourning, 2 Sam. 14. 2; Dan. 10. 2, 3.

Even though the Hebrew verb *mashah* is used only on one occasion to describe the anointing of a prophet, 1 Kgs. 19. 16, this was probably not unprecedented,³ and references to the anointing of

priests and kings are numerous in the Old Testament. In Leviticus chapter 4 verse 3, we read of 'the anointed priest', which may refer to Aaron as the High Priest who was, 'The priest who is exalted above his fellows, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been ordained to wear the vestments', Lev. 21. 10.⁴ Similarly, of the initiation right of Israel's first king, Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it upon Saul's head, thus acknowledging that God had authorized Saul to be ruler over His people Israel, 1 Sam. 10. 1. Whilst this procedure is replicated by Samuel in respect of David, 16. 13, nonetheless, throughout his life, Saul would be the Lord's anointed, hence David's reticence to kill him despite considerable provocation, 24. 7, 8; 26. 9. As JOHN OSWALT observes, 'Not only did the anointing presuppose special obligations, it was also considered to convey special status; this was the Lord's anointed, 2 Sam. 23. 1. To touch this person was in some sense to touch the Lord himself'.⁵ Successive kings would also be designated 'the Lord's anointed', e.g., Abishai refers to David in this context in 2 Samuel chapter 19 verse 21, again emphasizing God's choice of the individual, cp. Lam. 4. 20. According to W. E. VINE, 'In Isaiah 10.27, the yoke of Assyrian tyranny was to be destroyed "because of the anointing" that is, because of the consecration divinely appointed for God's people Israel, by reason of their union with their king, "The Lord's anointed". Their deliverance is due to identification with him'.⁶

In the Septuagint (LXX) the Hebrew word *mashiah* ('anointed one') is translated by the Greek word *Christos* hence the transliterated word 'Christ' that appears so frequently in the New Testament. Occasionally, the Aramaic form of *mashiah* (Messiah) is also found in the New Testament, see John 1. 41; 4. 25. The fact that prophets, priests and kings were 'anointed', pointed unmistakably to one who would come later and also be described as the 'anointed one' – Christ. This was reflected in the

prophecy of Daniel chapter 9 verse 25, as well as in the literature of the intertestamental period, where the eschatological hope of a coming Messiah or Christ, was maintained even into our Lord's day.

In the New Testament, anointing confirmed our Lord's ministry as He read from the prophet Isaiah, Luke 4. 17, and was anointed by the Holy Spirit in fulfilment of Isaiah chapter 61 verse 1⁷ – the use of oil being a symbolic emblem of the Holy Spirit, Heb. 1. 9. In Psalm 2 verse 2 we see the title 'anointed' given to our Lord amidst the clamour of worldly opposition, and, later, the title is vindicated by the Holy Spirit who subsequently empowers the disciples to boldly preach the word of God, Acts 4. 25-31. The Holy Spirit is thus clearly linked with this sacred anointing, which for the believer means that they too 'have been anointed by the Holy One', 1 John. 2. 20, 27, ESV; cp. 2 Cor. 1. 21, and set apart to serve God. May our service for Him therefore always be Spirit-filled.

For further reading/study

Introductory

Anoint, Anointing in *Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*, W. E. VINE, pp. 10-11.

Advanced

Anointing in *Dictionary of the Old Testament – Historical Books*, Arnold and Williamson (Eds), pp. 32-36.

Endnotes

- Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, pg. 37.
- The anointing oil was not to be used for cosmetic purposes nor for any other purpose, Exod. 30. 34-38.
- See Psalm 105. 15. (Tanakh translation), 'Do not touch My anointed ones; do not harm My prophets'.
- Quoted from the Tanakh Translation which can be accessed at <http://biblehub.com/jps/leviticus/21.htm>. In Psalm 45 verse 7, a similar comment is used of a king, and this text is then applied in the New Testament by the writer to the Hebrews to prove the superiority of God's Son over angelic beings, Heb. 1. 9.
- New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, WILLEM A. VANGEMEREN, Zondervan, pg. 1125.
- Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*, pg. 11. VINE is following the RV's translation of verse 27, i.e. 'because of the anointing'. The meaning of the Hebrew is, however, unclear. MOTYER concludes that the 'because of the anointing' is 'probably the nearest to a satisfactory meaning of the text as it stands', *Prophecy of Isaiah*, pg. 119.
- Compare Matt. 3. 16; Acts 4. 27; 10. 38.



'Your Five for the Day'

By **PETER FRANCIS** Trimsaran and **DAVID LISCOMBE** Treboeth, Wales

'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature', Mark 16. 15. This great commission spoken by our Lord almost 2000 years ago is just as relevant today as it was in the first century. But how do we 'go' as the Saviour commanded? Up until about seventy years ago, this was done primarily by person-to-person communication. Today, the internet takes text, audio, and video around the globe in milliseconds.

Radio Tircoed

Around the world there are a vast number of radio stations broadcasting. One such radio station is Radio Tircoed based in the relatively new Tircoed Forest Village, Swansea, in South Wales. Aired locally on 106.5FM and worldwide online at www.radiotircoed.com, this is a non-profit-making community radio station. The broadcast area targets 250,000 homes around junctions 46 to 48 of the M4, including Llanelli, the majority of Swansea and the Gower Peninsula, reaching Neath and Port Talbot to the east, and as far as Burry Port in Carmarthenshire to the west. It is not a Christian radio station as all genres of music are played 24 hours a day by around forty volunteer presenters to an estimated audience of up to 18,000.

In early 2014 we felt the Lord was leading us to produce and record five-minute 'Thought for the Day' style messages as a means of gospel outreach on radio. The main aim of the messages was to show the relevance of the Bible in the modern world by encouraging a personal relationship with God through faith in the work of the Saviour on the cross. After waiting on the Lord, ten scripts were written and then recorded in our own home-based well-equipped recording studio. Armed with the promotional CD, an approach was made in April 2014 to Radio Tircoed's Station Controller and a meeting arranged.

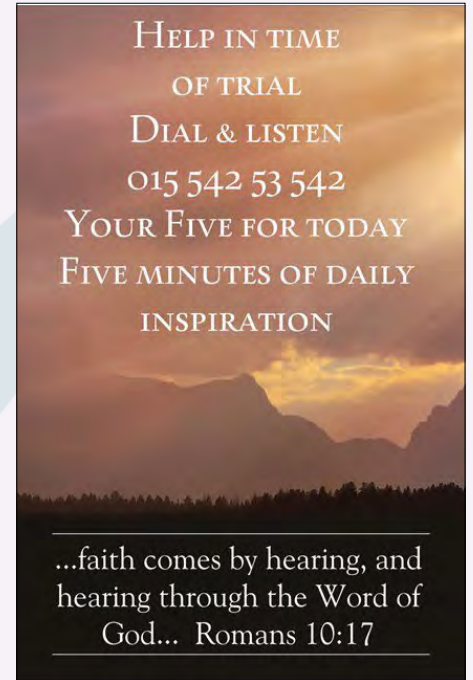
After listening to only two of the messages the Station Controller was pleased with the content and impressed by the professional

quality of the recordings. Without hesitation, he requested that four pre-recorded messages per week be produced to be aired on his Breakfast Show at 9.30 am every Monday to Thursday. He added that the timing of the approach to them could not have been more appropriate as they had recently renewed their licence to broadcast for a further five years. The only criticism from Ofcom¹ had been 'insufficient religious output'. What an answer to prayer and a confirmation of the Lord's leading and guidance! To Him be all the praise and glory!

We were invited into Radio Tircoed's studio for a live pre-launch promotional interview on Thursday, 17 July 2014. The Lord answered our prayers as during the hour we were given uninterrupted time to outline the purpose of the messages and explain the gospel. Despite much prayerful thought, at that time we did not have a name for our slot, but, unknown to us, the Station Controller had been pondering on a name too. Waking at about 5.30 am that morning he had thought about healthy eating and about consuming five pieces of fruit and veg every day. Then it came to him – five minutes of inspiration for daily spiritual health. So 'Your Five for the Day' was born.

We thank the Lord that since 'Your Five for the Day' was first broadcast on 21 July 2014, it is now part of the infrastructure of the radio station's schedule of programmes four days a week. We have built up a library of over 800 messages. From time to time we have been able to call on other brethren to assist with the work load of writing and recording eight new scripts every two weeks. This has been a great help to keep the regular presenter fresh, and it also gives the listeners the opportunity to hear a different voice and style of presentation.

On the very rare occasion when 'Your Five for the Day' has not been aired it has been very encouraging to know that regular listeners ring the radio



station to ask what has happened. Sometimes messages are played out of sequence or duplicated. It is on those occasions that someone has rung the radio station to say 'that message was for me today' – God's ways are not our ways, but He does know best!

Our regular radio station programme presenter has sometimes been unable to present his Breakfast Show and the different presenters who have stepped in at short notice have always been willing to play the messages. We thank the Lord that we have built up many friendships and have regular contact with the radio station staff and through this we have discovered that several of them have previously had evangelical connections.

New messages still go out at 9.30 am every Monday to Thursday. Since 2015, at the request of other presenters, previously aired messages are repeated at 11.45 am every Friday and at 11.30 am every Saturday. Through the Internet we also have listeners in England, Scotland, Europe, South Africa, Australia and USA. Whilst accurate listening figures are not available, it is known that the listening audience increases dramatically around the time of our regular broadcasts. All praise to His name!



Other broadcasting opportunities

In September 2014 we discovered that gospel music was being played from 7.00 am to 9.00 am each Sunday by a presenter who owned-up on air, on at least three occasions, to be 'a backslider'. He invited us to join him several times and soon agreed to a pre-recorded ten-minute gospel message called 'Reflections', to be aired at 8.30 am each Sunday. Different brethren became involved in this Outreach, and, after six months, the programme was moved to a Friday evening with 'Reflections' being aired at 9.30 pm. The presenter, thankfully, was restored to the Lord and publicly announced it during his last programme before he was suddenly taken ill and, sadly, died a few weeks later. Nobody has replaced him and the Gospel Show has stopped being aired. Many presenters do, however, play hymns and spiritual songs on a regular basis.

Since Christmas 2014 we have been privileged to facilitate, record, edit and broadcast hour-long, sound gospel-based services for Christmas Day, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. These have been recorded live from several Evangelical Churches in the nearby town of Gorseinon, and, last year, we had an extra opportunity on Christmas Eve to broadcast the Christmas Eve service from Treboeth Gospel Hall, which was gladly welcomed by the Radio Tircoed management team. All these opportunities are reaching thousands of needy souls and only eternity will reveal what has been of the Lord, and for His glory

CD ministry

When 'Your Five for the Day' was first broadcast the only way to listen to the messages was to tune in at the broadcast times. As many people were unable to tune in at these times, they began to ask for another way to listen. A CD of selected messages was made available at no charge and to date over 1000 copies have been distributed to individuals and churches for personal use in the car, at home, coffee mornings, services in residential homes and to distribute to non-believers as part of personal evangelism.

We have been told by several believers and non-believers that the messages

have given them strength in difficult circumstances. These encouraging words came to us recently, 'I have been passed a copy of your CD and wanted to tell you how lovely it is. I know the idea is for evangelism but I have felt spiritually encouraged myself and have been playing it over again on the way to work to prepare for often stressful times! So thank you'. A second CD has just been produced and both are available free of charge.

Phone line launched

The 'Your Five for the Day' phone line, 015 542 53 542, was launched on Monday, 29 May 2017, as a UK-wide gospel outreach. Anyone, anywhere in the UK is now able to hear a daily message, previously heard on Radio Tircoed. The messages are available to listen to 24/7 at standard network charges. Whilst we can envisage a poster on the notice board of every assembly in the UK, we are praying that believers, UK-wide, will be proactive in advertising the phone line throughout the UK for the glory of the Lord. Please can you help us by encouraging your assembly and your circle of Christian friends to assist in poster dropping for notice boards and flyer inclusion in tract distribution?

A2 and A4 posters are available for noticeboards in churches, shops, surgeries, hospitals, community centres, railway stations, in fact,



anywhere where people congregate. We also have A6 flyers to be slipped inside a tract distributed in open air work or house-to-house visitation. Recently 20,000 flyers were added to Seed Sowers packs for distribution in Birmingham, 1000 flyers and 50 CDs were given out in the Pembrokeshire Agricultural Show and several assemblies have used them in tract distribution and gospel meeting advertising.

Website on its way

The construction of a suitable website was part of our initial exercise, but this only became a reality when Thomas Jennings (Ministry for Europe Trust) asked us to be part of their 'City Bible' project. His vision was for a QR Code to be printed on the cover of the book. Scanning the QR Code with a mobile phone or iPad would give immediate access to a 'Your Five for the Day' message. With the help of brethren representing MET and a local Christian website builder, we are now very close to launching our website.

Points for Prayer

- the salvation of the precious souls who listen;
- the Radio Tircoed management team and staff;
- continued guidance and fervour in writing Spirit-guided scripts;
- producing and editing recordings;
- vision to be taken up by others (that's you!) to launch similar outreaches in the 100 other Community Radio Stations in the UK and beyond;
- seasonal outside broadcasts;
- completion of our website before the end of 2017;
- phone line to be used throughout the whole of the UK.

If you require a supply of flyers, posters or CDs to use in your personal or assembly outreach or would like further information, please contact us by email on your542day@gmail.com or ring Peter on 07903 347621.

Endnote

- 1 The Office of Communications, commonly known as Ofcom, is the government-approved regulatory and competition authority for the broadcasting, telecommunications and postal industries of the United Kingdom.



CHARACTERS AROUND THE A SOLDIER WHO OBSERVED HIM

Only two of the characters we have observed thus far in connection with our Lord's crucifixion have been Gentiles – Pilate and Herod. The Roman centurion is the third. The other two were involved in His condemnation and saw nothing of His death; the centurion brought on His execution and saw our Lord die. Whether or not Herod and Pilate were moved by what they saw or heard of our Lord we cannot tell; the centurion certainly was moved.

Many of us were taught in Sunday School that a centurion was in charge of a hundred soldiers. Some authorities, however, tell us the 'century' was a cohort, a unit of men, which could have been made up of between eighty to two hundred, some even suggesting up to a thousand men.¹ Whichever way we look at it, a centurion was a commanding officer in the Roman army, holding authority and respect. He was probably a hardened man of war, used to killing in battle and killing by way of execution. It is doubtful whether this centurion actually drove the nails into our Lord's hands and feet, but he was probably in charge of those who did.

What he heard

There can be little doubt that the crucifixion of our Lord at Calvary was unlike any other this centurion had carried out. At most public executions or crucifixions there would have been a large crowd to observe the sufferings of the victims, some to support and some to taunt, but the Gospels certainly record an enormous level of engagement by the crowd that gathered around Jesus of Nazareth in his public humiliation. While there was a small group who were there to support Him, we are told that many who gathered rejoiced at His execution and taunted Him publicly. Matthew records the chief priests with the scribes and elders 'mocking him', as they said, 'He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him', Matt. 27. 41, 42. Notice the sly, 'If he will have him', v. 43, for they certainly did

not want Him. Mark records their mocking words as, 'Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe', 15. 32; Luke that they derided Him. Matthew includes the reviling (taunting RV) of the passers-by, who wagged their heads at Him, saying 'Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross', 27. 39, 40. Mark adds that even the soldiers joined in the mockery, doubtless seeing the inscription above the cross, 'This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews', and offering him vinegar, and saying, 'If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself', Luke 23. 37. Even the two thieves, crucified with him, 'cast the same in his teeth', Matt. 27. 44, and 'reviled him', Mark 15. 32. What incredible hostility and animosity was shown to this Jesus of Nazareth! Some suggest that Psalm 22 describes the groups around the cross as they laughed him to scorn. The 'strong bulls of Bashan' that compassed him around could refer to the wealthy, self-sufficient rulers of the Jews; the 'dogs' could be the Gentile soldiers; the 'unicorns' or 'wild oxen' from whose horns He was to be delivered could be the powerful and cruel chief priests; the 'lion's mouth' could even refer to the presence of Satan himself.

Yet in the midst of all this cacophony of mockery, hate, reviling, scoffing and cursing there was something else this centurion heard. Where he had expected hate and viciousness in response, he heard someone who, 'when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not', 1 Pet. 2. 23. Instead of the oaths, cursings and threats the thieves would have expressed to those who crucified them, he heard this Jesus of Nazareth utter a **cry of intercession**, 'Father, forgive

them, for they know not what they do'. Where he expected to see self-interest and self-pity, he heard our Lord express a **cry of compassion** as he said to His grieving mother, 'Woman, behold thy son'. Despite the mockery that one of the thieves had hurled at this Jesus, he heard Him give, in response to the man's repentance and faith, a **cry of consolation**, 'Today thou shalt be with me in paradise'. Surely this was a man like no other he had ever known, who met anger and hatred with grace and goodness! Even in death, it could be said of our Lord, 'Never man spake like this man'.

What he felt

There was another uniqueness to this crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. Scripture records that 'at the sixth hour (twelve-noon) there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened', Luke 23. 44, 45. This darkening of the sun could not have been as a result of a solar eclipse,² because the feast of Passover, which was being celebrated over the days when our Lord was tried and crucified, took place on the fourteenth day of a new month, Lev. 23. 5. Fourteen days after the new month, the moon would have become a full moon, or very near to one. Solar eclipses can only occur when the moon is a new moon, and this was fourteen days before the crucifixion. Had it been a lunar eclipse, the eclipse would only have been observed at night, not during the day. The suggestion is, therefore, that this darkness, this 'darkening of the sun', which lasted for three hours (an eclipse lasts only for a minute or two) was a supernatural one, a picture either of God judging His people, the nation, or God hiding from human eyes the suffering of His Son when it was at its most severe upon the cross, or the very creation itself rebelling at the

By
IAN REES
Tenby, Wales



CRUCIFIXION 9

suffering and impending death of its Creator. Bear in mind that, following the darkness, as our Lord yielded up His spirit and went into death, there was an earthquake, rocks were rent, graves disturbed (all natural phenomena, creation tearing itself apart?) and, of spiritual significance to us all, a tearing in two of the veil in the temple, done by no human hand for it was torn from top to bottom, Luke 23. 45. God may very well have darkened the sun, but He most certainly tore the veil in two. There was celestial, geographical and spiritual disturbance at the death of Christ. Now the centurion would not have witnessed the tearing of the veil in the temple. Yet he would have felt the supernatural darkness at the brightest and hottest part of the day, and, no doubt, with the hushed and frightened crowds, he would have felt a deep sense of unease. 'When the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly', Matt. 27. 54. Luke tells us they all 'smote their breasts', Luke 23. 48. Thus this crucifixion brought unease and awe to all who were there to witness it. Our centurion felt deeply disturbed by it all.

What he said

So much so, that what he said was then recorded. As the supernatural darkness was lifted, the centurion heard **a cry of desolation** from Jesus of Nazareth, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' NKJV. This was followed by **a cry of devotion** to scripture, though the centurion would not have known it as such, for our Lord cried, 'that the scripture might be fulfilled . . . I thirst', John 19. 28. There then followed **a cry of jubilation** from the man on the central cross, 'Finished!' And then this centurion saw what he had never ever seen before – a man in total control over His own life and death. He had seen many a man die before, many, on the one hand, longing and straining for a death that was too slow in coming, many, on the other hand, struggling to prevent a death that was too soon in coming. But now, as he gazed at this Jesus of Nazareth, he saw a man rest his head

back on the cross³ and, gazing into heaven, with **a cry of resignation**, resigning His spirit into the care of His Father with the words, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit', Luke 23. 46. And then, magnificently, commandingly and powerfully, our Lord dismissed His spirit in an act of sovereign might. The result, for the centurion, was a conviction that led him to glorify God, Luke 23. 47. According to Luke he cried out, 'Certainly this was a righteous man', v. 47. This would seem to indicate that he was convinced Jesus of Nazareth had died an innocent man, unworthy of the death He had been given. Mark tells us he testified, 'Truly this man was the Son of God', Mark 15. 39; cp. Matt. 27. 54. Marginal readings tell us he could have meant, 'Surely this was a son of the gods', seeing as the Romans had a pantheon of many gods. That may well have been so, but whether he said, 'a son of the gods' or 'the Son of God', the centurion was certainly convinced that this Jesus of Nazareth was no ordinary man. He was divine, with divine powers and divine dignity, even in death. We are not to think our Lord died in weakness. He gave a loud shout and 'laid down his life', committing it into the care of the One who would not leave His soul in hell, nor suffer His Holy One to see corruption.

We can have little doubt that what the centurion heard at the cross, what he saw and what he felt, moved him to declare his conviction that the One he had just crucified was unique. Whether this led him to faith in this Jesus Christ we do not know. But we need to be careful that we, who have become so familiar with the sufferings of Christ, are no longer moved by them; that we, who do not meditate on them as often as we should, forget the awesome moment when the giver of life gave His life with such power that the skies closed their eyes, the earth revolted, the world shuddered and a heathen soldier was moved

to see divinity in all its magnificence.

O wonder to myself I am,
Thou suffering, bleeding, dying Lamb,
That I can view Thy sorrows o'er,
And not be moved to love Thee more.

Endnotes

- 1 Definition of a centurion in *Wikipedia, en.wikipedia.org*.
- 2 Crucifixion darkness' in *Wikipedia*.
- 3 'Bowed' His head, John 19. 30. *Klino*, defined by Strong as 'incline (bend forward) or recline (bend back)'. Definition by W. E. VINE, 'not the helpless dropping of the head after death, but the deliberate putting of His head into a position of rest, John 19. 30. The verb is deeply significant here. The Lord reversed the natural order. The same verb is used in His statement in Matt. 8. 20 and Luke 9. 58, "the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head"'. *Expository Dictionary*.





Do you have any heroes? Are Christians even allowed to have heroes?

In October 1517 a little-known Augustinian monk, who was also a lecturer in theology in Wittenberg University, Germany, made his way to the Castle Church in Wittenberg and hammered a document, known as the Ninety-five Theses, on its enormous wooden door.¹ This year is the five-hundredth anniversary of those hammerings, which echoed first of all through the vast stone building, then throughout Europe, and then throughout the world. Little did Dr. Martin Luther realize how profound would be the change in Christendom as a result of this document. As a child growing up in Sakeji School, Zambia, I watched several times a year, every half-term for several years, two black-and-white reels of film on the life of Luther that have burned into my memory the image of this humble monk standing alone before the pomp and splendour of the Holy Roman Emperor, the delegation from the Pope in Rome, serried ranks of bishops and clergy, princes and rulers, declaring, when commanded to retract his books and pamphlets on the Christian faith, 'Here I stand. I can do no other. So help me God!' Bearing in mind the conviction of all, that arrest and burning-at-the-stake was certain to follow, Luther's courage made him a hero to some, though he was a heretic to many.

Martin Luther was born in 1483 in humble, peasant circumstances. His father, a miner and smelter of copper ore, wanted him to become a lawyer, thus breaking the working-class traditions of his family. In 1505, however, whilst returning to his university to continue his studies in law, Luther fell to the ground as a thunderbolt during a storm nearly hit and killed him. So frightened was he that he cried out to St. Anne, patron saint of miners, that if he lived he would become a monk. Despite his father's deep disappointment and vehement opposition, Luther gave up law studies and entered immediately an Augustinian cloister in Erfurt, Germany. Roman Catholic teaching taught that righteousness was something that could be gained. Thus, Luther gave himself whole-heartedly to the austere regime at the monastery, fasting frequently, giving himself to

MARTIN LUTHER OF THE REFORM

long hours in prayer, wearing horse-hair shirts, beating his back with whips in order to purge himself from his sins, and giving himself to such minute and painstaking confession of sin that he drove his confessor to despair. Yet Luther could not find peace with God. In fact, he later referred to his time in the monastery as one of 'deep spiritual despair'. Peace with God was not to be found through self-denial and good works. He later wrote, 'If anyone could have gained heaven as a monk, I was surely among them'. Luther was sent on a visit to Rome to represent his cloister, where he was appalled and disillusioned with the godlessness and wickedness of many of the priests he encountered in what was supposed to be 'the holy city'.

Luther's Augustinian order was led by a priest called Staupitz, who was deeply anxious about Luther's state of mind and spiritual agonies. Exiled from the Augustinian cloister in Erfurt to one in Wittenberg, Luther was ordered by Staupitz to give himself to the study of the Bible and to lecture in theology. It was his study of the scriptures that would eventually lead Luther to faith in Christ. He began lecturing on the Psalms, Romans, and Galatians. His biggest struggle was defining the term 'righteousness'. Luther was also troubled by the expression 'the righteousness of God', which he had been led to believe was that attribute of God that compelled Him to judge the unrighteous. 'I lived without reproach as a monk but my conscience was disturbed to its very depths and all I knew about myself was that I was a sinner. I did not love, nay, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners'. Here was confusion indeed – a monk who outwardly lived for and served God, but inwardly hated and repelled by Him. But continued meditation on scripture led Luther to a profound change in his definition of righteousness. 'I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that through which the

just (righteous) live by a gift of God, namely faith'. It was Paul's phrase 'the just shall live by faith' in Romans chapter 1 that brought him peace. 'Here I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered paradise itself through gates that had been flung open'. 'That verse in Paul was for me truly the gate of paradise'. It had dawned on him that faith in the work of Christ on the cross alone would bring peace with God, not faith in his own penance. Righteousness with God was not something that could be gained, it was something that was given. Luther preached justification by faith alone with great power and thousands flocked to hear him. The world would never be the same again.

In the year 1516 a Dominican friar, Tetzel, arrived near Wittenberg selling indulgences. These documents, signed by the Pope himself, claimed to give the owner assurances that either he, or someone in whose name he bought them, would be released from purgatory and sent directly into heaven. Tetzel is reputed to have made a fortune in selling these indulgences, the funds for which went to the Pope for him to build St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. His call was, 'As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs'. Luther was appalled at the deception that was being wrought on the uneducated and innocent purchaser of these indulgences. The popular idea is that he hammered his Ninety-five Theses, questioning the sale and legitimacy of these indulgences, on the church door, intending them to be for public debate.¹ He also sent a copy of the theses to his archbishop, who forwarded them to Rome. Within a very short space of time, however, they had been translated by his friends from the Latin in which he had written them into German, and they had flooded through Germany. Within two months they had been distributed throughout Europe and there was uproar. Luther was eventually

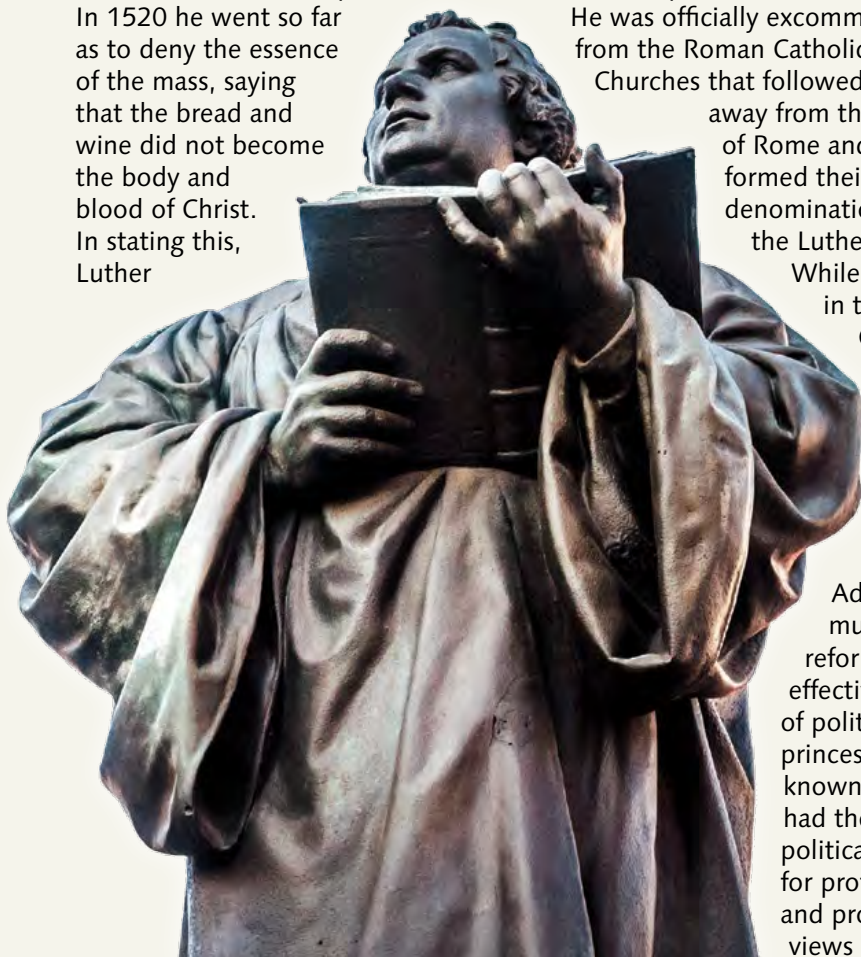
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R HERO MATION

summoned by the Pope to withdraw his teachings in various cities and royal courts throughout Europe. Initially, he never intended to break from the church, only to reform it, but increasing conviction of the fact that the Christian faith was to be defined by the scriptures only, not by popes or church councils, he was led to declare the Pope was in error. Salvation depended upon 'believing only in the truth of Christ's promise'. A man could be justified by faith alone, in Christ alone. The inevitable consequence of this was that pilgrimages, masses for the dead, shrines, the worship of relics, spiritual penance, and the buying and selling of indulgences were superfluous. Luther even went so far as to declare that, although the church taught there were seven sacraments, there are, in fact, only two – baptism and the breaking of bread. In 1519, at Leipzig, Luther was driven to state publicly that Christ was the head of the church, not the Pope. In 1520 he went so far as to deny the essence of the mass, saying that the bread and wine did not become the body and blood of Christ. In stating this, Luther



undermined the whole structure of the Roman Catholic Church. If God alone could forgive sins, the priest wasn't necessary. If the priest could not turn the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood, then he was not above the people. In 1520 the Pope sent a letter to Luther threatening to excommunicate him if he did not withdraw his writings. Luther publicly burnt the letter of excommunication. He published *On the Papacy at Rome*, in which he declared there were two churches in the world. One was external and visible and had a hierarchy with the Pope at its head. The other was 'a spiritual, inner church that acknowledged only Christ'. That same year saw him publish his *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* in which he taught the priesthood of all believers. Gradually but steadily the true foundation of the Christian faith was being recovered. Luther went so far as to call the Pope the Anti-Christ. In 1521 he was summoned to the city of Worms and it was here that he refused to withdraw his writings. Although Luther had been given safe-conduct to Worms, nobody believed he would be safe. On leaving Worms to return to Wittenberg, Luther disappeared – 'kidnapped' by his own prince/elector for his safety. He was officially excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church.

Churches that followed Luther broke away from the teachings of Rome and eventually formed their own denomination, called the Lutheran Church.

While hidden away in the Wartburg Castle, Luther began translating the Bible from Latin into German.

Admittedly, much of Luther's reforming zeal was effective because of politics; the princes of Germany, known as electors, had their own political reasons for protecting him and promoting his views in order to

lessen the influence of the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor. Yet God in His sovereignty allowed these men to push religious matters to such a great extent that the power and the authority of the Pope was smashed, and the recovery of the doctrine of justification by faith, which Luther had discovered and proceeded to preach, went, as we would say today, 'viral'. 'Protestantism' spread throughout Europe and the world, and the power and influence of the Roman Catholic Church was shattered. Martin Luther re-discovered the true teaching of the New Testament – faith alone, scripture alone, Christ alone.

There is no doubt that Luther, like other great reformers of his day such as Zwingli, Calvin, and Knox, were men of their times, and they did not turn completely away from Roman Catholic teaching. Luther, for instance, did not accept adult baptism by immersion. Much of what was said and printed was done in what we today would find intemperate language. It may be that we do not agree with all these reformers taught, and we are uncomfortable with the manner in which they worshipped. Yet there is no doubt that we stand today on giants' shoulders and that we are indebted to men such as Luther, who were led by the Holy Spirit to refocus Christian faith on the Bible, and then stand for the faith which we believe, and in which we rest today, with immense courage in the face of enormous personal danger. 'Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; the body they may kill, God's truth abideth still, and He will win the battle'. And He has!

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Endnotes

- 1 Some have questioned whether they were so hammered or whether they were merely forwarded to the archbishop of Mainz and then published publicly; Marius, *Martin Luther*, pp. 137-139; see also *Wikipedia*, Martin Luther.



Editor's Note: *The subject matter of this article is not an easy one; however, in the reflections of those who have personal experience of reaching out with a spiritual care to help in this area, there is much for us to consider and learn. I am sure that it will be understood by our readership why this article is anonymous. Much of the work of a shepherd in such circumstances must be done quietly and anonymously. We do pray that as this article is read, and the very honest thoughts and feelings are shared, there will not only be an increased awareness of such difficult issues, but a deepening exercise amongst believers to prayerfully support the work of true shepherds among the Lord's people.*

SUICIDE

Reflections on dealing with suicide

Sooner or later, any believer who either has distinct pastoral responsibilities in a local church, or simply has a pastoral heart, will, at some stage, most likely come upon a fellow Christian battling with depression and possibly having suicidal tendencies. It may be that if such a situation ends in tragedy, that person will face struggles themselves, partly because of a close friendship formed with the one they have tried to help, and, partly, due to blaming themselves for the outcome.

Reflecting on a sad case of depression that ended in a believer tragically committing suicide, there are experiences, truths and lessons which I pray might prove helpful to others who seek to come alongside Christians in similar circumstances.

Context

David states in Psalm 139 verse 14 that we are 'fearfully and wonderfully made'. Therefore, the overriding observation that I would make – that the underlying cause was much deeper-rooted than at first seemed to be the case – is one that could apply to a very broad range of issues faced in pastoral work due to the complexity of the human mind.

In the particular situation faced – and I suspect that this would be the case whenever someone attempts to help a believer with depression of

any kind – one of the most difficult tasks was that of distinguishing between 'clinical depression' which, while, of course, calling for the support of other believers, needs to be handled by clinical experts, and 'spiritual depression', which requires very careful handling by tender-hearted believers. It may be helpful to remark that, in this case, although the individual concerned had been treated for clinical depression, they were insistent that the root of the matter was spiritual rather than clinical. I believe this insistence stemmed from an intensely (and excessive) self-critical attitude, which in turn was probably exacerbated by the clinical depression that was being experienced.

Ideally, such individuals, along with family members associated with them, would be encouraged to seek the help of a Christian medical expert (if one is available locally) who would have a greater understanding of their reasoning, but, especially, would be more likely to be able to convince them of the true root cause. In this case I was dealing with an adult not connected to anyone else in the church by any family ties, and whose own family connections were not Christians. In such a situation there is really little opportunity for influence in this area.

Redirecting the focus

On the question of self-criticism, it is worth noting that we live in a day of huge contrasts. On the one hand, the 'need' for self-worth is promoted highly, and, in essence, this is contrary to the scriptural principle: 'humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up', Jas. 4. 10 NKJV. On the other hand, perhaps even as a reaction to this philosophy, naturally self-critical Christians can unintentionally undervalue the work of Christ by allowing sins of the distant past (either committed before salvation or since, but confessed and repented of) to haunt them and give them a sense of unworthiness to be accepted as believers, or even

of being 'beyond redemption'. Of course, we are all unworthy – saved 'by grace' alone, Eph. 2. 8, and 'kept by the power of God', 1 Pet. 1. 5 – but God now looks on us in a completely different way, as those who are 'justified [counted right] by faith' in Christ, Rom. 5. 1, having been 'justified [given that righteous standing] by God' Himself, 8. 30, and we are now 'accepted in the beloved', Eph. 1. 6. So, it is really a slur on the work of Christ to claim an unworthiness to be accepted by God. As to the possibility of being beyond redemption, Paul stated, 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; **of whom I am chief**', 1 Tim. 1. 15 (emphasis mine), and the promise of 1 John chapter 1 verse 9, that 'if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' can rightly be claimed by every true believer; again, to dispute the possibility of forgiveness is to challenge God's faithfulness to His promise. It is worth observing that, according to the latter verse, it is not God's love or grace that is being challenged but His faithfulness and righteousness; mercy, love and grace were all seen in the provision made for sinners in the death of Christ, but having made that provision God must forgive the genuine confessor of sins to be true to His name. I mention these truths as rocks on which the believer engaged in the counselling can stand, but we have to deal carefully with the lack of appreciation of them on the part of the sufferer as an ill mind can play all sorts of tricks. I witnessed the levels of these features, i.e., self-criticism, unworthiness and hopelessness, all increase as the sufferer's condition deteriorated.

Leading on from this, I note from general observation that many believers who have few doubts as to their eternal security early on in their Christian experience can suffer from a major lack of assurance later in life. One reason for this could be increased sensitivity to sin, in principle a good thing (in fact something which will



rightly characterize every Christian who is developing Christ-likeness) but, coupled with a weakening of the mind (perhaps due to age or a natural tendency to depression), this can lead to a destabilizing of the believer as the focus shifts away from the sure promises of God to his or her own inadequacies. I would judge that this is what happened in the case I was dealing with. For this individual, there had been doubts in the past about eternal security, but these had been largely dispelled by helpful literature dealing with Bible passages such as John chapter 10 verses 28 and 29, and reminding them of our standing in Christ, depending on Him and not on us. As the mind weakened, however, these concerns returned and when such verses were brought to bear on the subject the response was that perhaps they had never been saved (back to the question of being 'beyond redemption').

Contributing factors

Another conclusion I have drawn is that experiences early in life, e.g., abuse of various kinds during childhood, can not only scar the victim but also contribute to the development of unhelpful character traits. These may be suppressed during the vigour and busyness of early adulthood but re-emerge later in life, especially in the face of other trials or particular circumstances, e.g., loneliness. In this instance, harking back to those earlier experiences compounded the negative effect of a lonely existence, which resulted from difficult circumstances within a marriage relationship. As more and more cases of abuse in early life come to light, we are likely to come across this scenario more frequently in the lives of believers.

Something that might not be at all obvious (I certainly would not have thought of it had I not experienced it) is that witnessing such necessary action as appropriate church discipline administered on another believer can produce, or add to, anxiety and self-judgement on the part of an individual who is already tending towards self-condemnation, even though the individual has not acted in a way that calls for discipline. In this case, sins of the past long repented of reared their heads in this situation due to the person's state of mind. It is not

the purpose of this article to address the question of church discipline and how it should be administered, but my own thought, after seeing this effect, is that perhaps sometimes the reason for discipline is not sufficiently explicit, such that sensitive Christians may become over-anxious about their own past behaviour.

Spirit of gentleness

When the mind is not clear, poor judgements can be made and bizarre actions taken; I would suggest that these should be seen and dealt with in a gracious way in light of both the current condition of the mind of the individual and the background circumstances that may have influenced this condition; Galatians chapter 6 verse 1 may be a particularly appropriate scripture for such a situation, 'If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness', NKJV.

Coping with suicide

If the situation considered in the earlier part of this article should finally lead to the believing friend committing suicide, or if indeed any Christian has to deal with the trauma of a believing friend ending their life in such a tragic way, I would offer the following comments from my own experience.

On the negative side, it has to be said that the void left by the departure of a friend to be with Christ was exacerbated by the combined effect of the growing intensity of the friendship during the struggles leading up to the tragic event and the knowledge that this was a premature loss.

There is also a natural tendency to question whether one did enough to help prevent the tragedy, and anyone involved in such a situation may need help to rest in the Lord in this respect. If there has been a measure of failure, God would not have us dwell on it, but simply confess it and move forward with Him. Resting in the Lord is probably one of the most difficult things to do in the struggles and trials of life, and, if we feel that the trial is resulting even partly from our own failures, this adds to the difficulty. One can only guess that David would have felt like this when

returning from a potentially unholy alliance with a Philistine king in battle against his own nation. He found the city in which he was living ransacked and his wife and family and the wives and families of all his army taken captive; his army then threatened to stone him, and yet he was able to encourage himself 'in the Lord', 1 Sam. 30. 6. How important it is for us to be aware of the exhortations of scripture to find rest in the Lord – including in some of David's psalms – so that the Holy Spirit can bring them to our minds in such situations.

On the positive side, I found great comfort in the confidence that, although the action taken could not be condoned, the friend, as a true believer, was 'present [literally "at home"] with the Lord', 2 Cor. 5. 8.





Salvation brings priceless blessings to each individual Christian believer. These include justification, peace with God, union with Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. When we consider union with Christ, and new birth into the family of God, it becomes apparent that our blessings are not simply individual, but corporate; God's grace has made us members of the church, the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is *Himself* a surpassing gift both to the church and to each individual believer, God indwelling His people in all His plenitude, power, and grace. Just as a human body has a spirit to animate it, so the body of Christ is unified, animated, sanctified, and energized by the Spirit.

The Spirit Himself has several important functions in relation to the church: (1) inspired the New Testament: John 14. 25, 26; 16. 13; (2) pours out God's love in our hearts, Rom. 5. 5; (3) enables worship of God in the Spirit, Phil. 3. 3; (4) reveals deep things of God, inaccessible to human reason, 1 Cor. 2. 10; (5) strives within us for sanctification, Gal 5. 16, 17; (6) empowers God's people for service through the sovereign allocation of spiritual gifts; (7) glorifies Christ, John 16. 14.

In relation to (7) J. I. PACKER describes the Spirit's floodlight ministry in respect of the Lord Jesus,¹ 'It is as if the Spirit stands behind us throwing light over our shoulder, on Jesus, who stands facing us. The Spirit's message to us is never, "Look at me, listen to me, come to me, get to know me," but always, "Look at *him*, and see his glory; listen to *him* and hear his word; go to *him* and have life; get to know *him* and taste his gift of joy and peace"'.¹

Just as successful organizations seek the alignment of each individual's objectives to their overall strategies, so our gifts will honour God and build up our fellow Christians, not when they draw attention to the users, but when they support the Holy Spirit's declared priority to magnify the Lord

THE GIFTS OF T

Jesus. The emphasis of this paper is practical and pastoral, and will focus on 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14.²

Endowment of gifts

The usual word denoting a spiritual gift is *charisma*, meaning a gift involving grace (*charis*) on the part of God its giver. Other words translated 'spiritual gifts' are literally 'spiritualities' 12. 1; 14.1, and 'spirits', 14. 12, pointing to various manifestations of the Spirit of God.

Since gifts are **grace**-gifts, they can never be a basis for pride or boasting, 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive?', 4. 7. Instead they should enable humble and loving service to others, 'Freely ye have received, freely give', Matt. 10. 8. Four main passages address the subject of spiritual gifts in the New Testament: Rom. 12. 4-8; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4. 7-16; 1 Pet. 4. 10-11. None of the lists of gifts is exhaustive, indicating the rich variety and diversity of the Holy Spirit's resources and operations.

Chapters 12-14 of 1 Corinthians emphasize the Holy Spirit's role in relation to spiritual gifts. We might summarize as follows: Endowment of gifts, ch. 12; Energy for their use, ch. 13; Exercise of gifts, ch. 14. Chapter 12 may be summarized as follows: Harmony, vv. 1-6; Variety, vv. 7-11; Necessity, vv. 12-26; Responsibility, vv. 27-31.

Harmony, vv. 1-6

The opening verses introduce the topic of spiritual manifestations. Some are helpful, others definitely not so, vv. 1-3. The Corinthians were once at the mercy of the dark spiritual forces at work in idolatry, swept along like debris on a tide. How may a genuine spiritual utterance be assessed? As noted above, the Holy Spirit will always reflect the Lordship of Christ and magnify Him, v. 3; cp. John 14. 16.

Further, the harmonious operation of each member of the Trinity is set out, vv. 4-6; 'administrations' denote service and responsibility; 'operations'

focus on powerful activity. Paul is here applying the doctrine of the Trinity. Just as there is absolute harmony in the activities of the Godhead, so also there will be in the local assembly under the influence and powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Variety, vv. 7-11

Variety and diversity mark the Spirit's endowments, vv. 7-11. Each believer is given a gift for the edification of the whole assembly, 'to profit withal' v. 7; 1 Pet. 4. 10. To be 'in fellowship' therefore not only provides opportunity but involves weighty responsibility.

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Often people ask, 'Will this church meet my needs?'; 'Do I get anything from it?'; 'Is there anything here for my wife and children?' Whereas we should be asking, 'Is there opportunity to serve the Lord and develop my gift?'; 'What can I contribute to build up my fellow-Christians?' In a New Testament assembly there is liberty for the proper development and functioning of every gift that God has given to its members. To settle for less is to stop short of God's design.

Necessity, vv. 12-26

The Corinthians' abuse of the gift of tongues suggested a failure to value differing gifts, hence Paul gives teaching based on the analogy of the unity, diversity, and interdependence of the human body. 'So also is the Christ', v. 12 lit., relates to Christ and His body, the universal church - 'Christ corporate'. The emphasis in relation to the body of Christ is on both unity and diversity. How did this profound spiritual oneness come about? Each believer has been baptized into the Holy Spirit, of whom he or she drinks. The Holy Spirit therefore constantly unites and ministers life and vigour to the body of Christ of which every believer is a member, vv. 12, 13. Following the analogy of the human body, Paul sets out the following directions:

(1) There should be no envy, and no opting out, vv. 15, 16. In comparison to the foot the hand



THE HOLY SPIRIT

is elevated and far more versatile. The foot could easily give up, feeling that it is insignificant. Similarly, the eye receives far more information than the ear; 'a picture is worth a thousand words'.

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM made the acute observation, 'It's the members that are most similar that are likely to be envious one of another, e.g., foot/hand, ear/eye'. Those of us with lesser gifts dare not opt out! Note that in the Parable of the Talents, Matt. 25. 14-30, it was not the five-talent or the two-talent servant, but the one-talent servant who slothfully hid his master's talent in the ground, with severe consequences.

(2) No monopoly, vv. 17-20.

If the body were full of eyes good sight would be assured, but what a disaster if there were no hearing or smelling! At Corinth many would speak in tongues, sometimes even simultaneously, 14. 23! Other more edifying gifts such as prophecy and teaching were, apparently, discounted.

(3) No independence, vv. 21, 22 The head looks down from on high at the foot. But could it really do without a foot? In verses 15 and 16 the issue was not valuing one's own gift; here the fault is not valuing someone else's differing gift. This can be a snare in assembly life: undervaluing other believers whose gifts are different, and who maybe also think differently from oneself.

(4) Godly harmony and sympathy. There are parts of the human body which seem to be feeble, v. 22. Internal unseen organs are not on display but are absolutely vital, vv. 23-26. There are those which are not attractive, i.e., not for public display: we compensate by clothing them carefully. Many vital assembly ministries are not in the

public eye, but are most important nonetheless. God has 'tempered the body together' according to His own wonderful plan. This chapter teaches the sovereign design of the Spirit of God in relation to the distribution of His gifts, vv. 18, 24, 28. Let us therefore accept and celebrate His wise allocations.

Responsibility, vv. 27-31

Enriched by the diversity of the Spirit's gifts the local assembly's character is 'body of Christ', i.e., a local expression of the universal church, vv. 11-12. This



realization should impart great dignity to all our activities.

Paul ranks certain gifts in order of importance. The ministry of apostles and prophets was fundamental and foundational to the church, Eph. 2. 20. Foundations are laid only once. Whilst these functions have passed away their ministry is permanently available in the scriptures of the New Testament. 'Helps' support the poor, weak, and needy, cp. Acts 20. 35 RV, 'so labouring ye ought to help the weak'. This reminds us that many valuable spiritual gifts do not relate to 'pulpit ministry', and instead have a practical and personal focus, cp. Rom. 12. 8b. 'Governments', a nautical term, suggests spiritual wisdom for piloting believers through difficult situations and times.

Spiritual ambition is to be encouraged, provided one's motive is wholesome; but, writes Paul, 'Covet earnestly the best gifts', v. 31. How may we assess the excellence of a gift? Some criteria may be suggested: (1) acknowledges the Lordship of Christ, v. 3; (2) builds up fellow Christians, 14. 4; enabling in turn their gifts to flourish, Eph. 4. 8 ESV; (3) glorifies God, not the recipient, in order 'that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ', 1 Pet. 4. 11.

Gifts, graces, and growth

An important distinction has to be made between spiritual gift on the one hand, and the spirituality for its profitable exercise on the other. The Corinthian assembly 'came behind in no gift', 1. 7, yet sadly the selfish behaviour of some members illustrates this distinction. Paul therefore devotes chapter 13 to stress that a loving desire to build up one's fellow believers must be the controlling motive for all spiritually profitable use of gift. Spiritual gifts are a means to Christian growth in faith, hope, and love; these latter graces will persist, whereas one day the gifts will be no more, 13. 10-13.

Sometimes one hears downbeat assessments to the effect that an assembly is 'devoid of gift', but is that really so? On the contrary, Paul suggests that if the lack of particular gifts is felt, that should be a matter of prayerful exercise, 14. 13. How little attention seems to be given to this in prayer!

At the same time prayer and action belong together for, as with muscles in the human body, gifts are developed through use, cp. 2 Tim. 1. 6. Diligent elders will therefore be concerned to help Christians identify their latent gifts and potential contributions, as well as creating openings for their exercise and development, cp. Eph. 4. 15, 16.

Endnotes

- 1 J. I. PACKER, *Keep in step with the Spirit*, IVP, pg. 66, 2002.
- 2 For a careful exposition of 1 Corinthians chapters 8 to 16 see *Studies in First Corinthians*, MALCOLM HORLOCK, Precious Seed Publications, 2017.



Chapters 3 and 4 – The argument from precedent (Old Testament theology)

In these chapters Paul develops the main argument of the letter, namely that righteousness was dependent on the work of Christ alone not the works of the law. Whilst the chapters are more theological than historical, Paul's argument is buttressed again by history, Rom. 15. 4. In chapter 3, Paul's initial reaction to the defection of the Galatians is one of sheer unbelief and astonishment, hence his somewhat mild rebuke in verse 1. The Greek word *ἀνόητοι*, foolish, signifying a lack of understanding, or a failure to reason correctly – the New English Bible's translation of this word as 'stupid' is perhaps slightly harsh! Paul accuses them of being mesmerized by an evil influence. Had he not graphically presented the work of Christ to them like someone displaying a public notice yet their present reaction was to look elsewhere for salvation. To Paul, faith in Christ alone secured righteousness, and spiritual growth could not be sustained by human effort, 3. 2, 3. If it was now possible to obtain righteousness by human effort why had they been prepared to suffer in the past for an empty and hollow profession? The Holy Spirit had been given and received on the basis of faith in Christ and not by some legal requirement on their part, v. 5. An illustration of faith in operation is now provided by Paul as a proof of his argument.

The story of Abraham's faith is a master stroke in his dialogue with his Jewish opponents. They would have recognized, *per se*, the great importance of Abraham to Jewish life and tradition. If Paul could, therefore, show a unity between their faith and that of Abraham,

The Argument

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PART TWO

without the law, then the argument from precedent would prevail. Abraham was, of course, justified by faith before the introduction of circumcision, Gen. 15. 6; 17. 9. God had promised that through his seed He would bless all the nations of the earth. How was this possible when his wife was beyond the age of procreation? The answer was that Abraham took God at His word, and this resulted in spiritual, as well as temporal blessing. Thus, Paul argues that the true descendants of Abraham were children of faith not works. Faith brought blessing to Abraham, as it would to them, 3. 9. From chapter 3 verses 10 to 14, Paul then contrasts law and faith. If blessing accrued to those who are justified by faith, law only brought a curse, 3. 10. Man was simply incapable of keeping the law because of the weakness of human nature, Rom. 8. 3. Christ had become a curse for us by being hung on a cross, 3. 13, and, in His death and perfect obedience to the law, He had removed the curse of the law from us, cp. Col. 2. 14, 15. This one supreme sacrifice enabled God to fulfil His promises to Abraham resulting in blessing being extended to the Gentile world, and the giving of the promised Spirit through faith, 3. 14. But how did the law fit in with the promises of God? Could it affect the unconditional promises under the covenant that God made with Abraham, v. 15? From a human point of view, a covenant or will could not be declared invalid or altered once it had been proven. Similarly, the

unconditional promises made by God to Abraham could not be invalidated by the Mosaic law, which was not introduced until 430 years later, vv. 15-17. If they could be invalidated then it would make the inheritance dependent upon law not grace, but this was not in fact what happened, v. 18. But if the law did not bring blessing, why was it introduced by God? What was the principal purpose of the law, v. 19? Quite simply, says Paul, because of sin! The law was a parenthesis brought in by God until Christ came to fulfil the promises made to Abraham. Does this mean, then, that the law was superfluous, because it could not give life? No, the purpose of the law could be compared to the role of the Greek pedagogue or custodian who was employed to keep a child under discipline until he came to maturity. Once that happened, then the services of the pedagogue or custodian were no longer required. Similarly, the law's function as our custodian ended when we were justified by faith in Christ, vv. 24-26. Thus, the promise made to Abraham that his seed would be blessed had now been fulfilled in Christ, and all those linked with Him through faith union, vv. 27-29.

Since Paul had introduced the notion of the pedagogue in chapter 3, he now develops the idea of the freedom that a child or heir would enjoy once he came of age. This is likened to the freedom that came to the Galatians from being the adopted children of God through the saving





of Galatians

work of Christ, who redeemed them from the curse of the law. They now served God, not as slaves but as sons, 4. 1-7. But if they are now free from the requirements of the law in Christ, why would they again want to return to a state of bondage, vv. 8-11? When Paul remembered what the Galatians had previously done for him, he is even more perplexed about their present attitude. His great desire for them was that just like a mother who through labour brought children into the world, he wanted them to bear the image of Christ through his labours, vv. 12-20. This image would not, however, be achieved by returning to the law. And, as a warning shot to them, Paul uses the Old Testament story of Sarah and Hagar by way of allegory to show just what it meant to place oneself again under law, vv. 21-31. In the allegory, Sarah speaks of freedom, whereas Hagar speaks of bondage. It was the son, Isaac, of the free woman who ultimately inherited the promise, not the son, Ishmael, of the bond woman. Thus, by analogy, Isaac represents Christian believers, v. 31.

Chapters 5 and 6 – The moral/ethical argument (Practical)

If the Galatians were to express a life of freedom then they were not to entangle themselves again in the yoke of the law. Paul views the Galatians as slaves who had been through the process of sacral manumission,¹ and warns them of the danger of attempting to build again something that had already been destroyed, 5. 1-4, cp. 2. 18.

Paul has only condemnation for anyone, irrespective of status, who was encouraging the Galatians to embrace Judaism again, vv. 5-12. But, at the same time, he warns the Galatians that freedom in Christ was freedom from sin, not freedom to sin, i.e., Christianity was about liberty not licence, 5. 13. Love, exemplified in service to others, was the key to Christian freedom, vv. 13-15. Essentially, this freedom was lived out in the power of the Holy Spirit, but there was a constant battle for the ascendancy raging between the flesh and the Spirit within the believer, vv. 16-18. These conflicting principles of life produced very different outcomes, the flesh manifesting evil that would ultimately exclude an individual from inheriting the kingdom of God, vv. 19-21. Whereas the Spirit produced a crop that needed no restraint, and gave evidence of the ethical character of the kingdom of God, vv. 22, 23. Life in the Spirit brought with it certain obligations to others, especially where fellow Christians had erred in some way or were carrying inordinate burdens, 5. 24 – 6. 5.² It was also important that teachers of God's word should be supported by those who benefited from their teaching, v. 6. Above all, there was an inviolable principle that whatever a man sowed in his life that would he also reap, v. 8. Thus, if the Galatians sowed to the Spirit then they would reap a spiritual harvest, but if they went back to Judaism and sowed to human endeavour then it would inevitably lead to corruption, v. 8. Doing good to others, especially other Christians, would in the end bring its own rewards, vv. 9-10.

Finally, Paul puts his own imprimatur on the letter by taking up the stylus from his secretary, and making an appeal to the Galatians by reference to the cross of Christ, vv. 11, 12. The cross, which Paul had placed at the centre of his life, was the only thing that was worth glorying in, not the flesh, which was a mark of Judaism not of a new creation, vv. 13-15. Paul's identity with the cross brought upon him the brand marks of Jesus, v. 17 ESV, in contrast to the brand marks of circumcision brought upon Jewish legalists. It is only through the grace of God that men find peace and forgiveness; thus, Paul closes his letter to the Galatians with a benediction of grace. A timely reminder not to spurn the grace of God, v. 18; 2. 21!

Endnotes

- 1 The manumitting of slaves was common in ancient Greece, and according to ADOLF DEISSMANN (*Light from the Ancient East*, Baker, pp. 323-325), found its way into Jewish and Christian ecclesiastical custom. He suggests that we become free by the fact that Christ buys us, 1 Cor. 6. 20, and that those who are manumitted are expressly forbidden to be made slaves again, hence Paul's comments in Galatians chapter 5 verse 1.
- 2 The Greek word βασιτάζω in chapter 6 verse 2, meaning to bear or carry, is used here in a good context (contrast this with chapter 5 verse 10 of someone bearing the judgement of God). The application in chapter 6 verse 2 is of shouldering the burden of others, which might, in the immediate context, include the burden of shame of the guilty party. It should also be noted that verse 2 is not at variance with verse 5. In the former the Greek word βάρος, weight/burden, means a burden of oppression, which is too heavy for one person to carry, whereas in the latter Paul uses the Greek word φορτίον, a soldier's pack or to a ship's cargo, relating to the personal responsibility of each believer.





AT HIS FEET (1)

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

It was the prophet Isaiah who wrote: 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth', Isa. 52. 7. Those words were adapted by the Apostle Paul in his comments on the work of the evangelist: 'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things', Rom. 10. 15, but none could be more appropriately ascribed to the Lord.

Although there is a much wider study that could be undertaken on this theme, I want to look, briefly, at the topic of the feet of the Lord – the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings – and to look at Mary who was found at the feet of the Lord.

Luke 10 – Working at His Feet

– Service in its true perspective

John 11 – Weeping at His Feet

– Sorrow in its true perspective

John 12 – Worshipping at His Feet

– Suffering in its true perspective

You may have noted that of the three occasions we read of this Mary, and Mary is a common name in scripture, we read of her at the feet of the Saviour.

Luke 10 – working at His feet

In what might appear to be the introductory remarks surrounding this incident, it is important to notice the reception of the Saviour, 'a certain woman named Martha received

him into her house', v. 38. There is something rather precious about a house where He is welcomed! It is interesting too to remember the context in which these verses are found – the good Samaritan. In a situation that describes the indifference of the day, that Samaritan had stood out. At the end of the previous chapter, the Lord said, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head', 9. 58. Against that background, we find here that the Lord is received. There are very few homes in scripture where we might note that the Saviour was welcome. Says the scripture, 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares', Heb. 13. 2.

Notice, too, the responses to the Saviour. The response of Mary was she 'sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word', v. 39. For Martha, the response was that she was 'cumbered about much serving', v. 40.

I feel that we should have some sympathy for Martha. Service for the Lord can become all-consuming, as there is so much that needs to be done and so few that seem able and willing to do it. But should that be our sole focus? The difficulty was that she was 'cumbered'. Service had become a burden rather than a pleasure. It had distracted her attention from the Lord. It had worn her down, so easily and so quickly.

The evidence is seen in Martha's words, 'Lord, dost thou not care', v. 40. Martha feels isolated and undervalued. Sadly, we have heard similar words before. We might remember

the disciples on the storm-tossed Sea of Galilee fighting to save themselves from drowning. Worn down by their task and their inability to cope, Mark tells us, 'And he [the Lord] was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?' Mark 4. 38.

Is this possible? When we are weary and the burden seems unremitting, do we look at the service of others with anger or jealousy welling in our hearts? Do we ever question the Saviour's interest and care? To take our eye off the Saviour is to lose sight of His character and care.

The reply of the Lord to Martha is instructive. Although there is much in Martha's attitude that might draw out censure, there is tenderness in the Lord's approach. Her anxiety and agitation will not be eased by condemnation. Thus, the Lord's comment upon Mary is paramount, vv. 41, 42. It is imperative that Martha should see what is 'needful', or what is necessary or essential. What Martha is doing may be good, Mary has chosen that 'good part', that is, she has chosen what is best or better.

The Lord had said, 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink . . . Is not the life more than meat?' Matt. 6. 25. It is vital that we appreciate who is at the table rather than what is on the table. The important lesson is to see service in its true perspective and to appreciate the necessity of spending time with the Lord, meditating upon Him and His word.





↔ An Anchor for the Soul ↔

BY **DONALD NORBIE** Greeley, Colorado, USA

All quotations taken from the NKJV of the Bible.

When a ship comes into port it must be kept from drifting. The tides ebb and flow, causing a ship to drift. A storm may drive a ship onto the beach, causing extensive damage. A ship may moor to a pier and be secure. Or the captain may order the anchor lowered to keep the ship from drifting.

Religions emphasize emotion as an indication of spirituality. Then, leaders will seek to whip up emotion. This may be done through ritual, singing, shouting or meditation. At times repetition of a phrase will work up a crowd's emotions. An Islamic crowd can become intensely emotional, shouting the praises of Allah. A man once said to me, 'I love to go to that church to get high on Jesus'. But emotions come and go. It is impossible to sustain a 'high' indefinitely.

How can one know that he is right with God? How can one be sure of forgiveness and of God's commitment to him? A Christian who is relying on his emotions for satisfaction and security may have times of deep depression and will then feel God has abandoned him. All people have times of elation and times of depression. It is part of our human experience.

An anchor holds a ship steady because it is outside of the ship and is gripping a solid base. To live a stable, happy, Christian life one needs an anchor outside of oneself and our subjective emotions. God desires His children to be happy and secure in His love, not questioning His devotion to them. 'Thus, God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope

set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil', Heb. 6. 17-19.

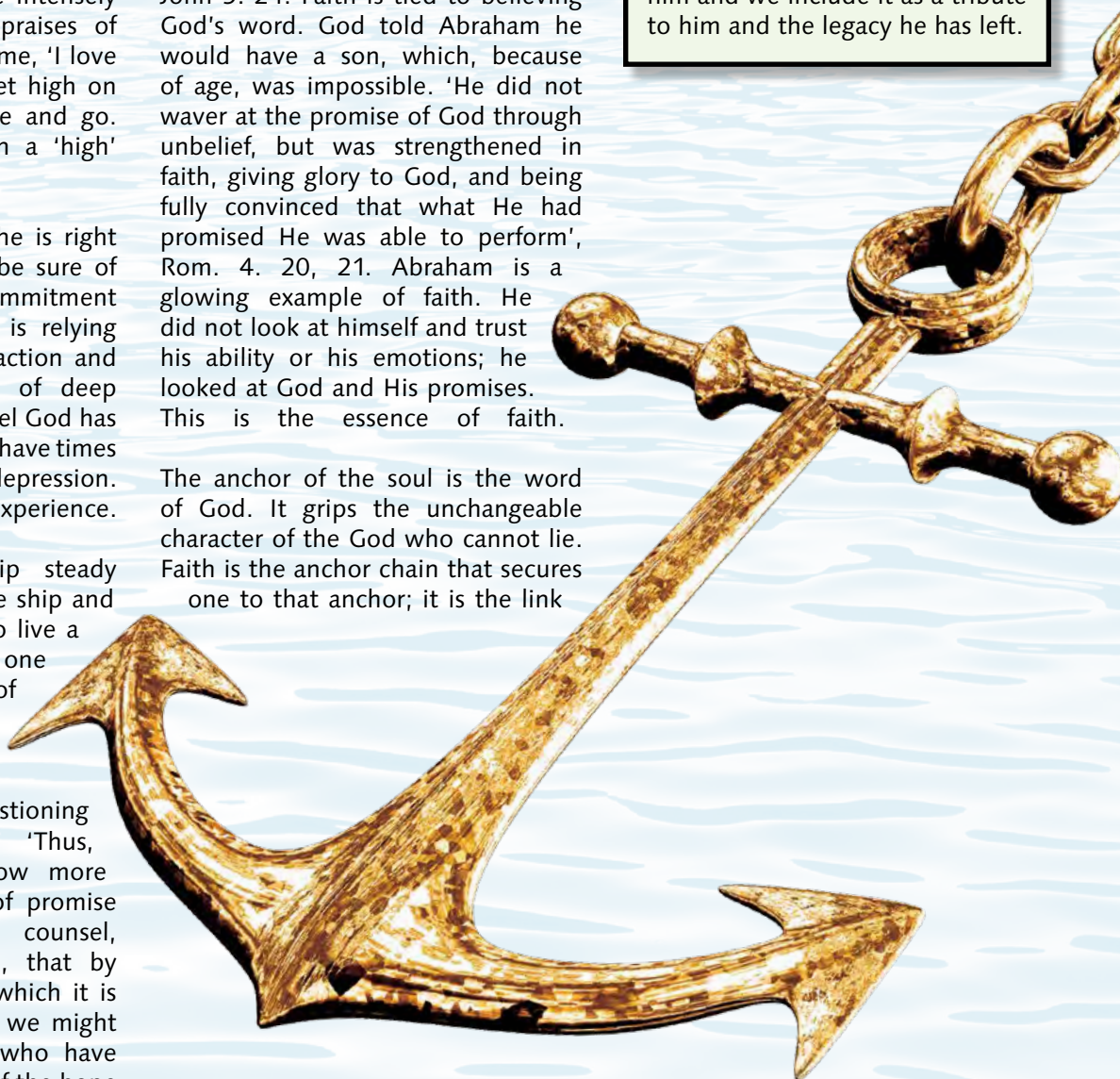
An anchor for the soul is that which will keep one from drifting into confusion and despair. God has made a promise and then confirmed it with an oath, doubly binding Himself to His word. A person's word is only as good as his character. God's character is impeccable; He cannot lie. One is saved when one becomes a 'believer'; he takes God at His word. Jesus said, 'Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life', John 5. 24. Faith is tied to believing God's word. God told Abraham he would have a son, which, because of age, was impossible. 'He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was able to perform', Rom. 4. 20, 21. Abraham is a glowing example of faith. He did not look at himself and trust his ability or his emotions; he looked at God and His promises. This is the essence of faith.

The anchor of the soul is the word of God. It grips the unchangeable character of the God who cannot lie. Faith is the anchor chain that secures one to that anchor; it is the link

with God and His word. Would you be a stable, happy Christian? Then focus on God and His promises to you. Do not look within, trusting your emotions for happiness and peace. By faith, cling to God and His word.

Editor's Note:

Donald Norbie was a regular contributor to *Precious Seed International* and other assembly magazines. His ministry was widely appreciated throughout North America and the UK. As this magazine was being prepared, we learned of our brother's home-call to glory. He had submitted this article before illness incapacitated him and we include it as a tribute to him and the legacy he has left.



Book Reviews

Compiled by JOHN SCARBROOK

Books are available from the publishers shown (or from John Ritchie in the UK, or Gospel Folio Press in Canada).



Pocket Commentary Series – 1st John Jack Hay

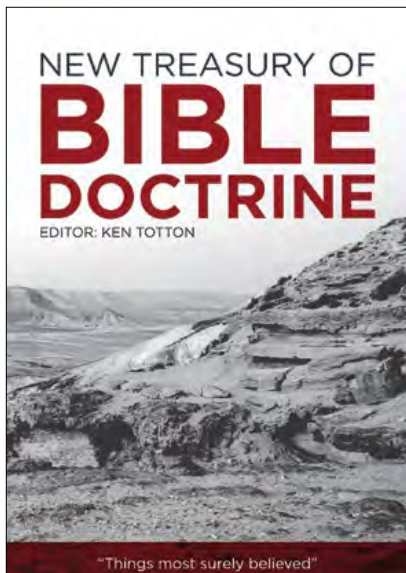
Paperback, 104 pages, Published by John Ritchie Ltd. 40 Beansburn, Kilmarnock, KA3 1RH. ISBN: 978-1-910513-68-2.

What is a pocket commentary? As the Foreword states, 'A need has been identified . . . for something smaller and shorter and cheaper – a mini commentary series'. Thus, a series of articles originally written for the *Believer's Magazine* has now been brought together in book form.

Anyone familiar with the oral ministry of the writer will welcome the opportunity to have access to something in writing. This little volume will not disappoint. It may only be a 'pocket commentary' but its statements are pithy and worthy of further meditation. I hesitate to pick out any, but offer this statement concerning 'God is light'; 'He is intrinsically righteous, impeccably sinless, utterly holy'.

The book is divided into ten short chapters and each chapter is sub-divided; one or two of these sections having alliterated headings. Overall, this encourages the reader, whilst giving a structure to the verses being studied, and enables that reader to locate the verse or verses they might want help with. The approach is non-technical and accessible, but also intensely practical. The following extract on 1 John chapter 2 verse 17 sets the tone, 'palatial homes become ruins, swanky cars become rusty wrecks, and flamboyant styles become dated. What is the point of loving the world when it is so obviously transient?'

If you want to understand this short epistle quickly and to have your appetite whetted for deeper study, get this book. I suspect that you will read it and re-read it. Hopefully, with the help of JACK HAY, the challenge of John's writings will also impact upon your soul.



New Treasury of Bible Doctrine: 'Things most surely believed'

Ken Totton (ed.)

Paperback, 590 pages, Published by Precious Seed Publications, 34 Metcalfe Avenue, Killamarsh, Sheffield, S21 1HW, UK.

ISBN: 978 1 871642 84 1. First published 1977. Revised and updated 2017.

This symposium of articles, mainly selected from the *Precious Seed* magazine, was originally issued as a companion volume to a similar symposium entitled *Church Doctrine and Practice*, first published in 1970. Both publications were warmly received at the time, and have been reprinted repeatedly. They have proved to be a very useful resource for the Lord's people.

However, since 1977 many more helpful articles have been published in *Precious Seed International* and its associated publications. The Trust has therefore decided to issue this revised edition of the Treasury, which retains the value of the original, but adds important new topics. About thirty new articles have been added, some specially written for this edition, on subjects which were not adequately covered in the original publication. These include a series of articles on the attributes of

God, previously published under the title *Behold your God*, and designed to counteract current attitudes in our increasingly man-centred contemporary world. Also included now are articles on the unity of the Spirit, Satan, angels, and the trial of faith.

The rising generation of Christians can benefit here from the ministry of many past and present Bible teachers. Amongst them are many well-known and respected brethren of former generations. This is part of their spiritual legacy to us. The doctrine which they teach is thoroughly sound and scriptural. Only in the section on prophecy are there any statements which some Christians today might justifiably question. The reviewer warmly recommends this edition to all readers, both young and old.

[Our thanks to Malcolm Davis, Leeds, England, for this review]

QUESTION

What advice can be offered to a couple who cannot have children?

ANSWER

This is not an easy question to answer for several reasons, not least of which is that I have no medical qualifications nor have I had to face this difficult situation. Consequently, I have not experienced the impact that childlessness can have on a husband and wife. In addition, advances in human fertility treatment means that couples now have choices that are not detailed within the scriptures and this can add to the dilemma they feel.

The question also assumes that advice is required, but this might not always be the case. Whilst some couples will really appreciate the uninvited guidance that can be offered, others will prefer to seek counsel rather than having it raised by someone else, no matter how sincere that person is. Much wisdom, sensitivity and sincerest empathy are essential prerequisites for anyone who would desire to act in an advisory or supportive role to these brethren and sisters.

Many people who are unable to have children have decided that the Lord has allowed those circumstances and they accept that as being His will for them. Unable to produce their own family they choose to refrain from considering any other option and have used this opportunity to devote the additional time and resources they have to the service of the Lord. Others, with equally tender consciences, believe that their situation enables them to think about options they otherwise might not have considered.

In summary, I believe that this is entirely a personal matter. Even though each couple should take into consideration any advice requested from family, friends and overseers, and should come to a conclusion before the Lord, knowing that they are accountable solely to Him.

Discounting surrogacy as being an appropriate option for believers, the choice that carries most ethical issues relates to *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) treatment. Details as to the clinical procedure are readily available from reputable sites on the internet and need not be enumerated here. However, in addition to the considerable financial cost there is a moral issue relating to the embryos not used in the treatment process. Knowing what is done to these embryos might result in couples concluding that it is a process incompatible with their Christian beliefs.

If guidance is required then the husband and wife can be informed that there are at least three other options available within the UK, and many other countries. They could seek approval for adoption, they may choose to be approved for fostering, or they can offer short

breaks (sometimes referred to as respite care). Perhaps one of the primary motivations for people considering adoption or fostering is the view that their lack of progeny enables them to offer a home and support to children who otherwise would not have the love and care they can show. The husband and wife will almost certainly hear anecdotal accounts of successes and difficulties encountered by people who have pursued either action but without ignoring these they are not necessarily reasons that should deter them.

The process of being approved for adoption or fostering is robust and very thorough but understandably there is good reason for this. The principal difference is in the legal outcome, as adoption is permanent and the child becomes the legal offspring of the adoptive parents. A fostered child can be with a family indefinitely, but that arrangement can be ended at any time for a variety of reasons.

Short breaks generally offers support to a family that has a child with a health need. This service provides immense help for the family and often enables a close relationship to develop between both families. In addition to local authority social services, there are a number of voluntary organizations that facilitate the adoption, fostering, or short breaks options.

We have several examples in scripture of God's overruling in the lives of women who thought they were not able to have children. Sarah, Rachel, Hannah and Elisabeth all subsequently produced sons who were mightily used by God for the glory of His name and the furtherance of His kingdom. Perhaps a couple who thus far have not been able to have a child will, in due time, have their own son or daughter.

For others this will never happen and they have to weigh up matters before the Lord as to whether they will pursue one of the choices outlined above. The words of Solomon apply in equal measure to all of us, not only in relation to the issue being considered in this question but in all facets of life, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths', Prov. 3: 5-6, NKJV.

In conclusion readers may wish to read two articles that appeared in *Precious Seed International* some years ago. In volume 67 issue 1 there is an article by MARK KOLCHIN entitled 'The Challenges and Blessings of Foster Care'; and in volume 63 issue 3 there is a composite article entitled 'Circumstances for Adoption'.

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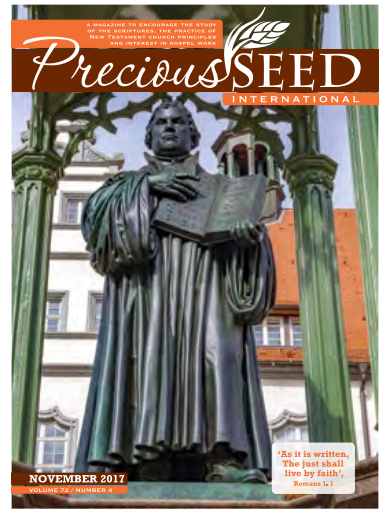
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Precious Seed International

Front Cover Illustration

**'As it is written, The just shall live by faith',
Romans 1. 17**

The picture on the front of the magazine is that of the statue of Martin Luther located in the town square of Wittenberg in Germany. It was here 500 years ago that the reformer challenged the authority of Papal Rome by formally attacking the practice of selling indulgences. Just as Acts chapter 15 records one of the great watershed events in church history, so Luther's promulgation of his '95 Theses' in 1517 represents another turning point, and one that would ultimately pave the way for others to secede from a medieval church riddled by simony and heresy. But Luther's finest hour was part of a much greater cry for reformation in Europe, albeit, for others, less to do with doctrine and more to do with administrative and ecclesiastical change. Luther, however, struck at the very heart of the papacy. Even though none of his ninety-five propositions included any mention of justification by faith, his whole approach only made sense because it was rooted in biblical doctrine and the grace of God. As OWEN CHADWICK writes, 'Luther did not attack indulgences and thereby reach a doctrine of justification by faith alone. He applied an already appropriated doctrine of justification to judge a particular indulgence'. Two things helped to facilitate the spread of Luther's reforming message. First, the humanist movement known as the Renaissance, which was a rebirth of interest in ancient Greek and Roman classics, and which emphasized the need of scholars to go back to the original sources (*ad fontes*). This meant for Luther, and subsequent reformers, getting back to original biblical texts written in Hebrew and Greek, hence the first Greek New Testament produced by Erasmus in 1516. Second, the invention of printing with mechanical moveable type introduced earlier into Europe by Johannes Gutenberg. Copies of the '95 Theses' were printed in German as well as being translated into other European languages, and then quickly distributed so that Luther's contentions became an overnight sensation throughout Europe. Provisionally, the spirit of reformation continues unabated with the result that large numbers of individuals down through the centuries have embraced the salvation of God through faith in Christ, and been justified freely by God's grace, Rom. 5.1; Eph. 2. 8, 9. As we remember the events of 500 years ago, may we, like Luther, not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, Rom. 1. 16, and make our stand for the truth of God's word, 2 Tim 1. 7, 8.



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