

No. 10

***Living Water* — Issue No. 10**

Page

Recent Teaching

THE MYSTERY OF PIETY	Malcolm Wallach	3
The first of a series of extracts from an address at Leamington, 3 rd December, 1994		
SOMETHING WHICH IS NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN	George West	6
An extract from an address at Gardenstown, 31 st December, 1994		

A Voice From the Past

A HOUSEHOLD FOR THE LORD — 4	Theodosia Powerscourt	8
Advice to a believer about to marry an unbeliever		
PIETY	F. E. Raven	16

Poetry Selection

THE PATH	Alonzo Boniface	14
BE NOT SILENT	E. Clutson	15

Testimony

A SELECTION FROM ‘THE TIMES’, March, 1995	18
---	-----------

A Word for Today

LOVE — THE ONE THING NEEDFUL	Alex Mowat	20
An address at Aberdeen, 8 th October, 1994		
WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH? — THE GIFT OF TONGUES		27

If you know of anyone who might like to subscribe to “*Living Water*” please write to the address below and a free copy of this issue will be sent to them.

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THE MYSTERY OF PIETY

“And confessedly the mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh, has been justified in [the] Spirit, has appeared to angels, has been preached among [the] nations, has been believed on in [the] world, has been received up in glory.”
(1 Timothy 3:16)

“The mystery of piety is great”. It is that God has been manifested in flesh. I want you to think about this, that God has come into this very world in which you and I live. He has come in with a view to Himself being known. God in His essence and eternal being and divinity is unknowable. One servant said about God that He dwells in unapproachable light, “whom no man has seen, nor is able to see” (1 Timothy 6:16). The wonderful thing in our dispensation is that God came, in the Person of the Lord Jesus, and He came into lowly, humble, simple circumstances. If you have been enlightened about that you can be thankful to God for it. When Jesus was here, God was here.

Firstly, I would take you to Bethlehem’s manger. There was the Babe. Who was there? God was there. Someone has said about that remarkable scene, that in that Babe there was a universe for God. When Jesus was here in that tiny condition, God was here. While the mystery of piety is unique and wonderful to apprehend in the life of Jesus, there is to be some reflection of it in the life of the believer.

“Confessedly the mystery of piety is great.” I think it is something impenetrable to the human mind, and yet God graciously would enlighten our hearts and our minds, this evening, with the preciousness that when Jesus was here, God was here.

It has been said that piety is bringing God into our circumstances. I want to modify that statement a little this evening, and suggest that it is rather that our circumstances are such that God can be brought into them. With Jesus it was always the case, perfectly, uniquely. His circumstances were such that He could always be with God in them. Can that be said of you? Are your circumstances such that whatever you do, wherever you go, whatever you say, God can be with you in them? It is a test. It is to me! I think it is a test to everybody here. Jesus was unique; He is the model, He is the example for us and the believer is to follow in that character. You may be misunderstood, maybe laughed at—Jesus was mocked—if you have to stand aside from some things because you do not feel you can be with God in them.

“Has been justified in the Spirit”. I understand that what Jesus did in this glorious, wonderful pathway was done in the Spirit’s grace and power. He says, for example, “But if *I* by the Spirit of God cast out demons” (Matthew 12:28). And as to His great sacrifice and offering on the cross, it says of Him, “who by the eternal Spirit offered himself spotless to God” (Hebrews 9:14). Jesus did not justify Himself, He was justified in the Spirit. The crowd could not make anything of Him. At one point they say, “who *is* this, the Son of man?” (John 12:34). You can imagine the frustration of the Pharisees, they could not penetrate the mystery of piety, “Who *is* this, the Son of man?”. They were aggravated by it. The Lord was misunderstood, mocked, jeered at; and yet the message was brought back, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). “This man has done nothing amiss” (Luke 23:41). Another says of him, “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:22).

“Has appeared to angels”. Think about that little phrase of scripture. Or, ‘has been seen of angels’; suggesting, I suppose, that God had not been seen by the angels until Jesus came into conditions of humanity. They had seen the devil; but now the angels watched Jesus, I am sure they watched Him in the wilderness. They saw Jesus there, and they saw the devil there. They saw Jesus in the garden, they saw those men lay their hands on Him when they arrested Jesus in the garden. Wicked hands were laid on Jesus. I think the angels were there, they looked on that scene and twelve legions of angels were ready poised to come into that scene of Gethsemane. The angels looked upon the scene of Golgotha too, when Jesus was taken and crucified. There He was, a Man, a blessed, unique and perfect Man. Dependence, meekness, lowliness, righteousness, grace, and love, all these qualities blended in infinite perfection, in one glorious Man. The angels saw that. “Has appeared to angels”.

“Has been preached among the nations”. The glorious message has gone out among the nations. We are among the nations. Jesus at one time said, “I have not been sent save to the lost sheep of Israel’s house” (Matthew 15:24). That was the Lord’s particular mission. But it has extended to us tonight! Right down to this day. “Preached among the nations”. What a message! What a glorious message has come down to us tonight, beloved hearers. A message about this blessed Man, God manifest in flesh.

“Has been believed on in the world”. Now that is a question I want everybody here to answer. I wonder if you are a believer on the Person, work and glory of

the Saviour Jesus? Is there anyone not yet trusting in Him? Boys and girls, young men and women, older persons here, is there someone in this hall who is as yet an unbeliever? Well, it is your opportunity tonight. He “has been believed on in the world”. Add your name now to the ranks of the believers on the Lord Jesus. It is wonderful to think of the message of the glad tidings going out; whether it is an address or a gospel preaching, the gospel is always current. I believe it is the intention that all under the sound of the gospel might come into the glorious gain of being a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. Believing is not just assenting to certain truths and attending services and then doing as you like. That is not a believer on the Lord Jesus as I understand it! Believing as John speaks of it in his gospel is to have a vital, living link with Christ.

“Has been received up in glory.” How beautiful! He belonged there. How God delighted in Him. He was raised by the glory of the Father and God has given Him a name above every other name. Wonderful! “Wherefore also God highly exalted him” (Philippians 2:9). Not just ‘exalted Him’, but “*highly* exalted him”. Jesus went back where He belonged. There is a Man in heaven tonight. Wonderful fact! God came here, manifest in flesh, and that glorious Man in all His perfection and wondrous Person is now enthroned in glory.

“God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name”. I love to speak to you about Him. It does me good to say something about my Saviour Jesus, it really does! I can tell you about a Man who is ready and willing to bless you, to save you and to give you happiness, joy and peace. The world cannot give you these things—there is excitement, I admit that. There are plenty of attractions, plenty of excitement. But I can tell about a glorious Saviour, who is my Saviour, who has given me peace and joy and satisfaction, deep down inside. That is where it is. Not just effervescent, here today and gone tomorrow. That is not the Saviour I know. I know a Saviour who will give you peace and eternal satisfaction.

Malcolm Wallach

In the next issue (God willing) there will be a further extract from this address:—
“The Mystery of the Gospel”

SOMETHING WHICH IS NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN

The purging of our former sins **2 Peter 1:5 – 11**

In his second epistle Peter is seeking to help believers, in a day of brokenness, to fill out what is set before us in the first epistle. In that way it is somewhat parallel to the second epistle to Timothy. In the first epistle you get the house of God in order and in the second epistle how, in a day of breakdown, individuals can continue in this line and in the enjoyment of it.

Peter in the first epistle, in chapter 2, says that we are a holy priesthood for service Godward and a kingly or royal priesthood for service manward. That is still true today. We may not be able to see it in the same way but in this second epistle he is telling us how these things can work in a day of breakdown. So he says in verse 8, “these things existing and abounding in you make you to be neither idle nor unfruitful as regards the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I believe there we get the working out of the holy priesthood and the royal priesthood and we are to be neither idle, that is, in the service of the display of the glory of God to man, nor unfruitful, that is, in what is for God.

Peter addresses the second epistle to those who “have received like precious faith with us”. That is those who had received the same precious faith as the apostles. Where we started to read it says, “for this very reason also, using therewith all diligence, in your faith”; now that is the faith he was speaking of. That is the faith we have each individually received from God. Then we read “in your faith have also virtue ... in brotherly love love”. That is a glorious end; it is God’s end, that the love of God might be shed in our hearts and seen in it. “These things existing and abounding in you make you to be neither idle nor unfruitful as regards the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”. Then to pass the next verse for a moment, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, use diligence to make your calling and election sure”. That verse would almost seem to be a contradiction in terms. “Calling” and “election” are absolutely from God’s side. But what Peter is trying to get at is that the sense in our souls that we have been actually elected by God might be in our hearts and affect us in our ways. Peter wants us to stand in this day we are in. “For doing these things ye will never fall; for thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be richly furnished unto you”. That is that the greatness of what

God has in His mind for us is open for us as individuals as we are prepared to enter into it.

Now I touch this matter of the purging of our former sins. This matter of purging is a very deep thing; it is not exactly the same as in John, “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin”. It is the same blood, the same cleansing, but it is viewed in a different way. It is what God has done for and with each one of us; we are after all only sinners saved by grace. Peter tells us that we are never to forget that. If we try to throw our weight about, then we have to come back to this that we are only sinners saved by grace and we have no weight to throw! We are nothing save what God has done for us. God has called us; apart from the work of God, we would be lost sinners. I do not mean that we have to keep asking God’s forgiveness; Paul did not do that but he never forgot what God had done for him; he never forgot that he was a sinner. He speaks of it in his epistle to Timothy and says that he is the first of sinners. Paul never forgot that and we are never to forget that we are sinners saved by grace.

In the tabernacle the boards which formed it each rested on two sockets of silver, the silver speaking to us of the redemptive work of Christ. All that on which God has set His heart is based on that and we are never to forget it. When we come to the highest truth in the epistles we are reminded of this. In the epistle to the Colossians in the first chapter Paul says, “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” In Ephesians 1 we are again touching the highest truths and again Paul says, “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences”. I would suggest that there in those two chapters we get a touch of the two sockets of silver. Continually to keep the greatness of what Christ has done in redemption in our minds would save us, balance us, and preserve us. Each board of the tabernacle had to stand on those two sockets of silver and it was not to be shaken.

I suppose one of the best examples in scripture of one who realised how much they were forgiven is Mary of Magdala. All the scripture says of her past is that Jesus had cast out of her seven demons. Scripture does not go into any more detail than that. Many at the present time would go into a lot of sad, sordid detail about their personal past history; yet this is all that scripture says about Mary of Magdala’s past. She knew the greatness of what Jesus had done for her and it kept her close to Christ in affection. She had been forgiven much so she loved much. She kept close to Jesus. She was there when He was crucified and there at

the tomb. As the risen Lord spoke to Mary of Magdala He gave her a wonderful message, “Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God”. Joseph Pellatt said that when Mary had delivered that message she went out of sight and the church came into view. We never hear of Mary of Magdala again after she delivered that message; her name is never mentioned in the Acts nor in any of the epistles. Mary of Magdala, one who loved Jesus, one who realised how much she was forgiven, went out of sight in the glory of God’s thoughts.

George West

In the next issue (God willing) there will be a further extract from this address:—
“Something which is best forgotten”

A HOUSEHOLD FOR THE LORD — 4

ADVICE TO A BELIEVER ABOUT TO MARRY AN UNBELIEVER

(An extract from the letters of Lady Powerscourt)

Note:—

It is not known to whom the following letter is addressed and though Theodosia Powerscourt did not at the time of writing seem to have much hope of influencing her correspondent, the fact that whoever received the letter, subsequently made it available to be published gives grounds for believing that the warnings given in the letter were heeded and the sacrifice made. The original letter, probably written about 1830, is very long and it has been shortened somewhat for publication in this magazine. In a few cases words have been added to aid readability. Where this has occurred the words concerned are enclosed within square brackets thus [].

My very Dear..... ,

... I lose not another day in writing. The reasons which kept me hitherto from doing so were various but the reason which weighed heaviest with me was a fear of making you unhappy, without being of any use. But now you give me liberty to say what I think, and as I think much on it, I fear my letter will not be very short.

It was truth you spoke when you said I should not have encouraged [your engagement] had I known all the circumstances. I was indeed, astonished at your reasoning ... but not the least astonished at the engagement of your affections, for this, I often told you, I expected ... I feel most sincerely for you. It is the fashion to laugh at and ridicule love, but ... I do think it among the most painful of [things] ... for the happiness or misery of one dear to you, to hang upon your "yes" or "no", and yet to have to pronounce "no", and thus leave an impression of ingratitude and unkindness. To know [that] there is one ... [who is] miserable on your account, and yet not [to be able] even to attempt to administer comfort,—it is very painful, especially when to this is added a long "never".

I am a very hard hearted creature, but there are some cases in which I can in some degree understand the command, "Weep with those who weep," and your case borders too much on my own not to sympathise with you,—I mean when I speak of your giving it up. Therefore do not think what I may say unkind. I am not ignorant [of] what it is to give up an object tenderly beloved, but I can only say, I am not ignorant of the peace which follows, when the lacerated soul is at length able to surrender itself, with a subdued and unruffled heart, into the arms of [the Lord's] everlasting love, saying, "Undertake for me" ... But, however painful the struggle, it is short and light compared with what you, [if you marry an unbeliever] will be entailing on yourself and him.

Is it happiness to disappoint the high expectations he has built upon in his union with you? or do you expect to be more amiable than our Jesus, and think you will succeed in walking consistently, [as a christian] and yet pleasing the world? Or is the carnal mind to be expected to endure it better? Do not be angry at my speaking of him as an unbeliever; for if [he is] not now a believer, it is presumption in you to build upon his seeming anxiety on the "one thing needful". If the Bible is true, there is a rooted enmity within; and though he may admire the religion of Jesus at a distance, he cannot love to come in contact with it in every

turn of life; to have it the subject of conversation, the end to which every thought, word, and action, tends. I say not this, only from seeing it around, but the word of God has said it; and truly I can say from what I see, dear..... love-conversions are not to be trusted.

I do not say it is hypocrisy in Mr..... or in many others I could name [to show apparent interest in the things of the Lord] but love for the individual really deceives them into love of what is dear to that individual ... It was not hypocrisy in another in my eye, [for him] to drive [constantly to town] with [what are now] his wife's relations, on purpose to talk of [spiritual] subjects: to come to this house, and show such anxiety as to sit up nights with dear..... inquiring into the truth. Alas! you could hardly now distinguish if she is a christian or not. ...

I could mention one who spoke at all the Dublin Meetings, so zealous was he for the truth; yet when the prize was obtained, he opposed and put a stop to her visiting the poor, or having schools—put an extinguisher over the Lord's bright light. I could mention another, whose prayers deceived even the very elect, [who is] now contending for balls, plays, [and] reading novels.

Passing over many others, I could come nearer home, and remember letters full of [religious subjects,] by one who never meant to deceive ... It was not hypocrisy; he really admired and joined in it; and continued long to join in every way. Religious society, church-going, reading with and arguing with his wife, even attending the catechising [of] the poor; and though his kindness, and love, and affection, are as devoted as ever; is it happiness not to be able to speak of your Beloved, who occupies, or should occupy, your every thought, without exciting the strongest expressions of disapprobation? Is it happiness to have no communication with one always with you—he despising your pursuits, you not relishing his?

Is it happiness, while rejoicing in the glorious promises yourself, to feel your very joy [is also] your greatest grief, in being reminded that he that is dearer to you than your own soul, has no part or lot in the matter; fearful every time he goes out knowing he is without God, and consequently without hope in such a world?

Is this a highly coloured picture? Alas! not. How far short of what most endure; how often is it persecution; how often ... every exertion [becomes] a drawing and quartering of affection: duties spiritual drawing one way, duties earthly the

other; till from necessarily opposing the will of him who expects to be obeyed, the affections of the idol loosen, and all the &c. &c miseries ensue. ...

Is it fair of you, knowing this, thus to deceive, and ruin the happiness of Mr.....? Is it not better to cut it in a vein that can be healed? You will say, "Oh, you do not know Mr..... or you would not so speak; he could not deceive, he is so natural." I believe it; and, remember, I said it was not hypocrisy. From what I have heard, I believe him to be thoroughly amiable, and, I dare say, well inclined. But if you have waited for an earthly father's consent, why not for a heavenly Father's?—why not [wait] till his good inclination end in conversion, till his seeking end in belief?

[The reason you do not is] Because you are sure it is God's intention to bring him to Himself, and that by your means. Really, my dear..... what are become of your reasoning faculties? Have you been let into God's counsels? and even if you have, are you to disobey His will, in order to bring them to pass? Do you remember whose work conversion is? and does He require you to do evil, that He may do good? Were you to have given yourself to him before you knew the Lord, and then expect that He would hear your prayers for him, it would be expecting abounding grace; but is it less than presumption, with open eyes to unite yourself with him now, and then expect, that since you have not fitted yourself to God, He will fit Himself to you? I should fear you were leaving yourself without an argument to plead with Him. Would it be excusable to run away with Mr..... and marry him at Gretna Green, because you feel so certain your father intends to give his consent?

But perhaps you will say, "The Lord has not forbidden it." I have again considered the chapter in Corinthians. I am still of [the] opinion that it is exactly [to the] point. Keep in mind, there is no middle state. Read Romans 8 and see that those who are in the flesh are not in the Spirit; those in the Spirit are not in the flesh. If the evidences given of those in the Spirit (to whom alone the promises belong) are not seen in him, he is in the flesh, and he is to be considered by the christian in the same light as an infidel, as to "Evil communications corrupting good manners". Surely if the Israelites are so repeatedly urged not to mingle with the heathen, lest they learn their works, and are so often chastened for this sin; are we in no danger [if we take] such, as guide, counsellor, companion, the repository of our every care, joy, and sorrow, the one we vow to obey? Believe me, a man will not learn from his wife. Why are the Lord's people kept so separate—a peculiar people—throughout the

Bible? and what was the effect of their intermarriages? See both Ezra and Nehemiah. Did Solomon, with all his wisdom, lead his ungodly wives the good way? or did they lead him the bad? Is human nature changed? Why did David so repeatedly say he would not know, or even have to dwell in his house, one that is not the Lord's [and] that he looks upon such as his enemy, and even that his companions shall be those who fear the Lord? Is not still the path of the just a shining light? Is the way of the ungodly less darkness? Have light and darkness more communion than they had? Why does St. Paul bid us to marry only in the Lord? Is it that you shall have more advantages than at home? The Lord has settled the one, and can glorify Himself in you, who are His property, bought, [and] paid for. He has forbid the other.

I do not expect you in the least to [take account of] what I say, and I fear all this will be seen some day by Mr.....; but I have said nothing against him, except that he is not now one of God's children, which I gather from yourself. I deny not but some day he may turn out a brilliant light; but whether or not, I must think it the greatest presumption for you, in his present state, to marry him.

As for his being afflicted, do you mean to say that none are afflicted except the Lord's children! I wish I could think the same, and that all I have seen under stripe upon stripe, or even those who have been at the time softened by it, consequently must be safe. Alas, alas, no.

When I found writing [to you] was useless, I prayed often; but your reasoning on this also is strange. You determine if you can to walk into the fire, yet you tell me to pray that you may not be burned. Would you think it reasonable for me, were I to yield myself to the dissipations of the world, and tell you to pray that I should not be led into temptation. As to [your argument about] God making it out by His providences ... If I were asked what I saw in His providences, I should be inclined to answer, He is emphatically asking, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" You answer in words:

"Give what Thou canst, without Thee I am poor;
With Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away"

But you as plainly deny it in action. He says, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

It is painful to flesh and blood to cut off a right hand, to pluck out a right eye; yet it is expected, and those are not worthy of Him, who are not willing to give up all, "take up their cross and follow Him". Abraham's was a painful trial of faith, when called to offer up Isaac. Would it have proved his love, if he had said, I cannot do that; but if the Lord takes him from me, I shall be resigned? The trial of your faith must be more precious than gold, must be tried in fire, and will prove itself by giving up the idol; not in being resigned should it be denied by your Father; not, by determining, if you can, to do evil, that good may come.

As to saying you have consented, that I consider as the world's snare. You made a promise you had no right to make, and, therefore, you have no right to keep. The Lord says, "Give me thine heart". Mr..... says, "Give me thine heart". The Lord says, If you give me all, time, talents, everything, without the heart, they will be nothing. Mr..... says the same. You answer, I will give it to both. But stop, and remember who it is says, "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Remember who says, He will not divide the heart with Belial. Choose then, whom you will serve. Oh may you be able to answer in action, Lord, Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love Thee.

Oh! well He knew our frame who appointed that our heaven should consist of love. It is a dangerous feeling to be trifled with! There is something so sweet in loving and being loved. All in Christ Jesus shall drink together of the draught of everlasting love, when at length we reach that ocean of love without bottom or shore: when He shall Himself show us in the map of time, the line of love which has traced out our every step through this dark howling wilderness. There we shall wonder at ourselves for ever hesitating, whether He that spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us, will not with Him give us all good things.

*"Above the rest this note shall swell—
My Jesus hath done all things well."*

Hoping and praying for your eternal good, whatever may happen,—that the evil as well as the good may work for it,

I am, Dear....., as ever,
Your very sincerely affectionate,
T. A. P.

THE PATH

Across the dark grey sea,
I saw a pathway bright.
It seemed to say, how well to be
In God's unclouded light.

Save in this path of gold,
Gloom reigned on every hand.
I loved its glory to behold
In isolation grand.

One path through all this scene
Unknown to earthly ken
Tells where the Father's Son has been
God's Christ refused of men.

And now in heaven we see
The glory of the Lord,
Unveiled His face, unveiled are we
In true and sweet accord.

The Spirit grants the sight
Of that Resplendent One,
We enter on the path of light
Who come to Him, the Son.

From glory, yet once more
To glory brought are we.
To be like Him, whom we adore,
His face in light to see.

Oh correspondence fair,
To God be all the praise.
Who through redemption brought us where
We on His glory gaze.

Alonzo Boniface
1922

BE NOT SILENT

Be not silent to me: lest ... I become like them that go down into the pit."

(Psalm 28:1)

THOU art not silent, blessed God,
In this Thy day of grace:
Thou dost address men far and near,
Beseeching them Thy voice to hear,
And seek the Saviour's face!

Thou once wast silent, O my God,
To Christ upon the tree:
He loudly cried, forsaken there—
Thou hid'st Thy face as He did bear
My sins—to make me free.

Shall I be silent, God of love,
And not my tribute raise?
Shall these redeeméd lips and heart
Not yield their blest and hallowed part
To sound aloud Thy praise?

O God, for ever unto Thee
I will give thanks and sing:
With gladness Thou hast girded me—
For Thine own pleasure set me free:
My Saviour-God and King!

E. Clutson

PIETY

Piety is practical confidence in the living God. (16/181) Manchester, 1902

If a disappointment comes, depend upon it it is better for you than if you had got the thing. When all failed here outwardly, the Lord said, "I thank thee, O Father" (Matthew 11:25). It but made way for greater and deeper things.

(9/265)

Greenwich, 1896

I judge of things by piety. Asceticism and celibacy and abstaining from meats, are not piety. On the other hand, attaching importance to worldly advantage and money is not piety. Piety is the antidote to what would come into the churchPiety avails itself of every mercy that God has been pleased to place within your reach. If God has been pleased to place marriage within your reach you avail yourself of God's mercy. So, too, with meats. They are God's mercies. They are received with thanksgiving of them that believe and know the truth.....if you get benefits from God you will never abuse them if you are pious.

(18/65-66)

Plainfield, 1902

I do not expect the direct guidance of the Spirit in the business of this world, but I do expect that in every circumstance my mind may be under the control of God's Spirit, and thus to do my business a great deal better, to do it according to God. I want to be a capable man down here, but not according to man's ideas.

(8/12)

Exeter, 1894

I question if it was ever the thought of God that man should amass wealth. The prayer of Agur was, "Give me neither poverty nor riches". (Proverbs 30:8)

(4/50)

Piety is not merely consenting to truth, but you bring the living God into the details of life. (16/246)

Whitby, 1902

Whatever may be our pathway here, the circumstances into which we have been born, it is a great point that the heart should be free from the love of money, and that the spirit of one's mind should be that of confidence in God, in the blessed sense that God is a reality, and that He has special regard for those who believe.

(3/130)

A man's piety indicates his measure, not that which he knows. Doctrine held alone makes a man conceited, and there is not the tone about him which a pious man has. (19/421)

My great pleasure in going to the book of Psalms is that they are so very expressive of piety, trusting God in difficulties, and under pressure, and such like. Now the full light has come, but it will not do to take occasion of that to lose piety. (19/422)

I think that piety means the sense of God's care in regard of every necessity of this life, so that one is not governed by mere worldly prudence or forethought Faith carries me into God's things, piety brings God into my things. (11/342) 1898

There is a great danger because of the amount of doctrine which is current among us, for if it is held apart from piety it may be a very mischievous thing. Piety is not exactly practice, but it is practical. It is the acquaintance of God that issues in practice. (19/421)

Faith is, that we have the light of God's things; piety is, that we bring God into our own things. (2/269) 1896

It is a point of the greatest interest for the soul to be entering into God's things. You will not enter into God's things if you do not see how God enters into your things. Unless you apprehend God's love to you down here, it is futile to expect to be led into the range of God's things; but if you are led into that great circle of interests, that universe which is centred in Christ, you have to learn the capability of God to fill it all. (19/77) Manchester, 1903

The above is Chapter 19 of "HANDING ON THE TORCH", being extracts from the ministry of F. E. Raven. This 159 page book is published by Stone Publishing Trust, cost £4.00 (post free). Please send a cheque with your order to the Trust at 130, London Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1BA.

Testimony

On March 6th, 1995, “The Times” carried an article by Matthew Parris, one of their regular columnists. In it he spoke of something about christianity which had troubled him for a long time. Christianity, he said, gave us “a reason to be good, but a disgraceful one. We are asked to be virtuous in order to save our own skins.” He went on to refer to various passages in Matthew’s gospel which refer to divine judgment, finally quoting Matthew 25:41. “Then shall he say also to those on the left, Go from me cursed, into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I hungered, and ye gave me not to eat... ill, and in prison and ye did not visit me.”

Mr. Parris’ article continued: ‘Are there really no better reasons to feed the hungry? The reasons Jesus offers here are worse than inadequate: they diminish the individual; they impoverish the spirit; they promote cravenness; they inject a meanness into the human motivation. Far from lifting our hearts from self regard, they propose self regard as a motive. Reward and punishment – greed and fear are worse than insufficient as answers to the question “Why?”; they deprave moral reasoning. I wish to read the Gospels in another way but I cannot.’

Two days later four letters were printed in “The Times” and because the reasoning of Mr Parris’ article is probably something which most christians have encountered somewhere, either in their own hearts, or in conversations with non-christians, some extracts from these letters are given below:—

From Rutton Viccajee:

“The Bible trumpets, implies, suggests, commends and whispers throughout its length a number of absolute truths, many of which may be politically unacceptable to the non-Christian: that God is holy, that man is fundamentally sinful, that the two cannot meet without the Cross, that without the Cross there is judgment and that man’s self-reliance on his own choices and efforts leads to disaster.

“Mr Parris ought to accept the Christian message not because he should help his fellow man out of higher motives than fear of punishment, but rather because he ... ought to accept the spiritual realities of the way things are and not only save himself, but find peace with a God who is indeed a loving guide as well as a Holy Judge.”

From Mysie Sutherland:

“...Matthew Parris must have heard the awesome fact of life that the wages of sin is death.

“That we are all guilty of sin is inescapable. But God sent His Son not to condemn the world but that the world through Him should be saved. Most of us know we are wrong but we are too proud to accept that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”

From Dr. Richard Harries:

“Matthew Parris, in his column today, is right to be troubled by the teaching of Jesus about divine judgment. So am I. It is best, as he says, to do good for its own sake, rather than through fear of the consequences. But it is not quite as simple as that.

“First, in a world of manifest injustice, so much innocent suffering, and where the motives of others are hidden from us, religious faith looks forward to a time of true justice, of divine rather than human judgment. But we cannot have the good being revealed in all its goodness without the bad being revealed in all its wickedness (and the line runs through us all)... So divine judgment, however unpalatable to a modern sensibility, is an essential element of any faith that right will ultimately be vindicated. ...

“Thirdly, the whole thrust of the message and mission of Jesus is that in Him we can even now meet the everlasting mercy and compassion of God. I always find Luke 12:4-7 instructive: (here quoted from the Darby translation)

“But I say to you, my friends, Fear not those who kill the body and after this have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom ye shall fear: Fear him who after he has killed has authority to cast into hell; yea, I say to you, Fear *him*. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and one of them is not forgotten before God. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore, ye are better than many sparrows”

This recognises the fact that fear is part of us; says that, given this; it is better to fear God than man—but directs us to a God who values each one of us ...

LOVE — THE ONE THING NEEDFUL

Romans **5 : 8**

John **14 : 23**

2 Corinthians **12 : 15**

The main motivating principle in christianity is love. My concern tonight is to lay these well known verses before each of us as a challenge as to whether in our lives the main motivating principle is love. The fruit of the Spirit is love. Paul implies that if it is absent our christianity may not have started. He says, “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.” Then more, “If I have prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing”. And more, “And if I shall dole out all my goods in food, and if I deliver up my body that I may be burned, but have not love, I profit nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1–3). It is clear, in Paul’s mind, that this great matter of love must be the prime motivating principle in the life of every believer in the Lord Jesus. That immediately brings a challenge home to every christian. Is love the main motive in my life?

When God gave the law of old it did not really touch man’s affections—“thou shalt, thou shalt not”—it did not really bring forth love in man. In fact embodied in the law was the commandment to love. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God” and so on, “and thy neighbour as thyself”. That is still as big a test today as it was when the law was given. Dr. Wolston tells of how he was called out one night to see someone in a hotel near his home who had been taken ill. When he came out of the hotel he saw that a house up the road was on fire and he thought it was his own. He set off running up the road but someone who knew him and realised what was the matter called out ‘It is not your house; it is your neighbour’s’. He stopped running! That is a very simple illustration that has an echo in the life of everyone of us. Who of us loves his neighbour as himself? So if the law did not beget love in man’s heart what was it that was going to beget love? What was going to produce this motivating principle in the lives of men and women and boys and girls? Love is of God and so if there was to be any begetting of love there must be the full demonstration of love by none less than God Himself. So the story of God’s love made known in Jesus unfolds. What a story

it is! A love that has come near to rebel sinners and brought us near to God Himself. Thus God has shown that in every movement He has made towards His creature that movement has been motivated by divine love. In Jesus He has demonstrated the fullness of His heart of love.

I read first, “But God commends his love to us in that we being still sinners Christ has died for us”. Through this verse I learn that there was nothing in me to merit that love. It was not when there was some improvement that God loved us but when we were still sinners. He drew near to us in the fullness of His love in the Person of the Lord Jesus, with the intention that if He demonstrated that love governed all His movements, so this same motive might govern us too. This finds us out. We know that often our motives are impure in some of the things we undertake. There was never an impure motive in the heart of God, or in the heart of the Lord Jesus as He came to make that wonderful love of God known.

I read of Jesus in John 4 drawing near in weariness to Sychar’s well and sitting down there. What drew Him to that well? It was not His weariness. Let us allow the Spirit of God to draw the veil of His weariness aside and what do I discover? I discover a God who verily is a God of love. “God is love”. It was not the Lord’s weariness that brought Him to the well; it was His love for a poor sinner. He would speak to her about matters concerning eternity, that she too might be prompted by love and draw others to Him. So I find Him weary by the well, speaking to a woman. He is not angry or upbraiding. When she does not understand He says, “Go call thy husband”. He says it kindly, I am sure; He says it in love and in the saying of it He shows her herself. He had to show her herself in order that then He might show her Himself. When He showed her herself she knew she was a sinner. Then He showed her that He Himself was love. O the wonder of divine love! In all He did here His motive was always to display the love of God.

So in your experience and mine how has He showed Himself? Is it not as a Saviour motivated only by love? It is a love that is not motivated by anything in ourselves. “We being still sinners Christ has died for us.”

We see Jesus entering Jericho and speaking to Zaccheus and bringing salvation to his house, revealing to him His heart of love. I could never fully speak on the subject of love, but in some little measure tonight I want to show how love was demonstrated in the movements of Jesus when here.

God commends His love. He commended His love in Jesus when here and in many cases it drew out opposition but He still commends His love today. So it says, "We being still sinners Christ has died for us". While I see wonderful perfection in the life of Jesus, if I am to learn the love of God I must learn it in the death of Jesus. O dear friend, have you accepted by faith that Christ died for you? Paul says, "in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me". The motivating power in the life of Christ was love. "Who loved me and gave himself for me". Christ died for us, and there, at the cross of Christ, I witness the pouring out of perfect love, a love that could only be divine. Human love must fall back when I see love so amazing, so divine. Well might Isaac Watts say in his hymn that it 'demands my soul, my life, my all!'

I see God's righteousness at the cross of Christ condemning sin, but through it all I find that most beautiful mingling of love and righteousness. No one can say that God's love has shone out unrighteously or unjustly. On the basis of the death of Christ God's love has shone out to you and me and to every sinner in this world on a perfectly righteous basis. The whole question of sin has been met since God's righteous judgment was poured out on the head of Jesus. When I come to the cross of Christ I discover that that God is a God of love and that love is shining out on such as me. "He has taken us into favour in the beloved". What does that mean? He has taken sinners into His favour into the shining of the fullness of divine love. So if I have to learn love, if I have to learn its activities, if I have to learn it as a motivating principle in my life, I have to learn it in the One in whom it has been most perfectly expressed, in Christ Himself, and that, in death. Christ has died for us. What a statement! Five words! Well might the universe in a sense stand still as a witness to the fact that none less than God Himself in the form of a Man was required to manifest the fulness of the heart of God.

If I look at the tabernacle of old; I see all the details and dimensions given for what was to be a dwelling place for God but it could never tell out the heart of God. I look at the Temple, the details again given and all the dimensions; but it could never tell out the heart of God. Only when I see Jesus, the suffering One, do I discover that the heart of God has been told out and told out for me. It passes telling; it passes praises; how great is the love of God. It is all to be discovered in the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, I read that verse in Romans simply to show that the motive of God's movement towards me in love was not due to anything in me but it was in the heart of God Himself. Oh what depths there are in that mighty, powerful, sovereign love that chose us for blessing.

Now in John's gospel we come to the words of our Lord Jesus Himself, "If anyone love me." I want tonight to emphasise these words to everyone here. "If anyone love me". Who is speaking? The blessed Master Himself. You say that He is speaking to His disciples, to the eleven in fact because one had gone out, but He says, "If anyone love me." He does not say, 'If any one has special talents, or special gifts, special ability, or great material resource, or if anyone has no material resource'. He says, "If anyone love me." O dear brother, dear sister, is love for Christ the main influence in your life? The law was given as a standard for men to attain to, as a rule by which they might walk; all it did was to show the sinfulness of man, the failing character of man; when we come to christianity the great ruling principle is love for Christ. I hope the warmth of that love is in every heart here. "If anyone love me", says Jesus. This One, Christ who has died for us, this is the One. "If anyone love me". He had washed their feet in the previous chapter. He had taken a hand-basin with water and a linen towel, and in the humility of bondman love, He had got down at their feet and washed them. How often He has washed my feet. How often, I would say, He has washed your feet! Let me put this to you again—"if any one love me"—do you love Him? I believe that every day of our lives these words need to come before us. In what way today will love for Christ motivate me? In what way today will my movements be governed by love for Christ? In His days on earth every day was motivated by divine love. There were no grey days with the Lord Jesus. How many of our days are grey days; let us brighten them up with the shining of the love of Christ. He is ready to shine into our hearts; let our love for Him so shine that we keep His word.

He says here, “if anyone love me, he will keep my word”. Have you kept His word? O how blessed His word is! As you go through the gospels think of the words He spoke to His own—He says at one point to them that the heavens and earth are going to pass away but His words are never going to pass away. There is nothing so valuable as the words of the Lord Jesus. Have I kept His word? Have you kept His word? The motivation for keeping His word is love for Him. It is not to be ruled by some regulation; it is not to be governed by some creed; it is love for a Person and what a wonderful Person! A Person who has died for us at Calvary’s cross and suffered so much. A Person of whom we sing in the hymn:—

*‘Thy beauties, Lord, Thy holy precious worth,
Surpassing far the deepest joys of earth,
Attract our hearts—our joy Thy constant love,’*

O to have a greater love in my heart for such a Person! “If anyone love me, he will keep my word”. Think of His word about feet-washing. He told His own that He had done it as an example to them. So He left that word amongst His own, about feet-washing. Have you kept His word about feet-washing? Many times my feet have been washed by some dear christian. It is not literal; it means that I get refreshed by a word about Christ, a word which may come to me when I am feeling down and after hearing something of Him I am encouraged, cleansed and refreshed. Maybe you were in the prayer meeting and when something was said you found your feet being washed. That is how it works.

Well, we are to let love be the ruling principle in our lives. The Lord says, “But he that loves me shall be loved by my Father and I will love him and will manifest myself to Him”. What disclosures are open to the lover of Christ! “And my Father will love him”. I think it is beautiful that this blessed Person who in every way portrayed the features of the Father could speak on behalf of the Father and say, ‘In this way you will be loved by my Father. My Father will love you.’ Think of the Father’s love embracing you. “We will come to him,” He and His Father will make their abode with him. What do we know about this, in these individual conditions? It is, “if any one”, What experience have I of my love drawing out not only the love of Christ but His presence and the presence of the Father? You may say ‘It is just a theory.’ Well it was not a theory to John. The

writer of this gospel had rested in the bosom of Jesus but by the time he wrote the gospel he had been on the Isle of Patmos, probably having laboured in the salt mines, and had probably felt deserted by all his christian friends. Yet, even in those conditions, I think John is saying in his gospel, 'Look, what I am saying works, because I have proved it for myself; if love is the motivation in your life and you use it to keep His word you will discover that the presence of God Himself is vouchsafed to you.' What a reward! Do you want anything better? I believe that is what is available to the christian in these last and difficult days.

Finally just a word on the last verse we read. Paul says, "Now I shall most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your souls, if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved". This is love in service. How often we have done things, activities that in themselves are good, but how often when we examine our motives we find that our motivation was something other than love for Christ. Paul is writing to the Corinthians; they had said many harsh things about him but Paul would say, 'Look, I am not really concerned how you treat me. I seek not yours but you. Your soul prosperity is what I seek. I am prepared, despite what your reaction is, gladly to spend and be utterly spent for your souls.' Where did he learn to love like that? I think he had learnt it at the Master's feet. He had learnt the spirit of service from the Master Himself. Maybe he learnt something of it from Stephen. Paul was at the stoning of Stephen and he saw selfless service portrayed in the first martyr. He heard the prayer of Stephen, "Lay not this sin to their charge", and I think something began to work in Saul's soul that eventually bore fruit in service towards the people of God. "I shall most gladly spend" and he had so much to spend. Ah, yes, Paul—look at him earlier in the chapter; he brings out his experience in the heavens; for fourteen years he had kept that precious privilege of being caught up to the third heaven a secret. What he had seen there, what resources he had! How well he spent them! Look at the previous chapter; balance chapter 12 with chapter 11; look at these verses, "five times have I received forty stripes save one". Three times he had been scourged, once stoned, three times shipwrecked, a night and a day passed in the deep. There had been perils of rivers, perils of robbers, perils from his own race, perils from the nations, perils on the sea, perils from false brethren. What motivated him? Love! He was not perfect; I do not mean to convey that, but largely in Paul's life and service the motivating principle was love. "I shall most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your souls if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved". If you have a desire to serve, dear

brother, dear sister, may God bless you in it, but may you be in it as loving the people of God. Start by loving the people of God and you will find that soul prosperity will come that way.

There are many activities, evangelical activities, shepherding activities, foot-washing activities; take them on but take them on in the spirit that we have in this verse here, not looking for a return except the return that will be yours in that day when the Lord comes and His reward is with Him. For the present be like a Paul, “if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved”. Truly he was like his Master. Let us walk in the steps of such a Master, who demonstrated God’s love in its fulness and perfection.

May God bless the word.

Alex Mowat.

**Children, let us not love with word, nor with tongue,
but in deed and in truth.” (1 John 3:18).**

**Thou hast been slain,
and hast redeemed to
God, by thy blood,
out of every tribe,
and tongue,
and people,
and nation”
(Revelation 5:9)**

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH? — THE GIFT OF TONGUES

Tongues are a gift from Christ to the church

“And these signs shall follow those that have believed: in my name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues...” (Mark 16:17).

They are given by the Holy Spirit to one or another

“For to one, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom... and to a different one kinds of tongues... But all these things operates the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each in particular according as he pleases” (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).

They are particularly a sign of God’s grace reaching out beyond Israel

“...Behold, are not all those who are speaking Galilaeans? and how do we hear them each in our own dialect in which we have been born, Parthians and Medes, and Elamites ... and Arabians, we hear them speaking in our own tongues the great things of God?” (Acts 2:7-11).

“And the faithful of the circumcision were astonished... that upon the nations also the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out: for they heard them speaking with tongues and magnifying God” (Acts 10:45, 46).

They are a special sign to unbelievers

“So that tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers” (1 Corinthians 14:22).

The gift of tongues is a minor gift

“...do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But desire earnestly the greater gifts” (1Corinthians 12: 30, 31).

“But greater is he that prophesies than he that speaks with tongues...”
(1 Corinthians 14:5).

Showing christian love is far more important

“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1).

Tongues are not for use in the church

“I thank God I speak in a tongue more than all of you: but in the assembly I desire to speak five words with my understanding... rather than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Corinthians 14:18, 19).

“If... all speak with tongues, and simple persons enter in, or unbelievers, will not they say ye are mad?” (1 Corinthians 14:23).

“He that speaks with a tongue edifies himself; but he that prophesies edifies the assembly” (1 Corinthians 14:4).

If tongues are used in the church there must be an interpretation

“If any one speak with a tongue... let one interpret; but if there be no interpreter, let him be silent in the assembly...” (1 Corinthians 14:27, 28).

Paul’s summary about tongues

“So that, brethren, desire to prophesy, and do not forbid the speaking with tongues. But let all things be done comely and with order” (1 Corinthians 14:39, 40).