

No. 13

LIVING WATER — Issue No. 13

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EDITORIAL

As “*Living Water*” starts its third year, I would take the opportunity to express my appreciation of all the help and support which have been provided by so many. Without the help of transcribers, proof readers and many others little would be achieved.

Readers may be interested to know that over the last two years articles from “*Living Water*” have been translated into French, Swedish and Russian. In this issue the process has been reversed and an address given in Russian and translated by a Ukrainian believer is included.

Articles are now designated as copyright to the Stone Publishing Trust. This is a requirement of the Charity Commission. It will continue to be the policy of the Trust to allow reprinting where ever this is possible without infringement of the copyright of others.

An article by George Cutting, “Forgiveness in its three aspects” starts on page 16. It is rather longer than usual for articles in this magazine but some time ago it was a great help to me and it is reprinted with the prayer that it may be of help to many others too. Some minor changes have been made to reduce the length. This article is intended to be the first of a series of articles on foundational truths in Christianity. Others on such topics as “The House of God” and “Spiritual Growth” will follow, if the Lord will.

The Trust now has a Freepost address (see the bottom of the ‘contents’ page) which readers in the UK are welcome to use if they communicate with the Trust.

“*Living Water*” is now available on tape to those who are blind or have difficulty in reading. Any who wish to be included in the tape list should advise the Trust.

Mark Lemon

JESUS STANDING — AMONGST HIS OWN

John 20: 19-26

In this scripture we see Jesus, after He had suffered on the cross and shed His precious blood, standing in the midst of His disciples. What a marvellous work He had done. He said, “It is finished”. Perfect, completed work of the Lord! He was buried and He rose again the third day, but He was no longer serving publicly, no longer serving in Israel.

Jesus, out of death, was here for forty days and then went to the right hand of God. During the forty days He came to where His disciples were on two occasions on the first day of the week. The disciples had been scattered after Jesus was taken captive. Several went to the tomb. Peter and John saw and believed and went away to their own homes, but Mary stood at the tomb. She was not content with knowledge; she wanted Jesus and Jesus gives her a special manifestation for herself. She does not recognise who He was to start with but she wanted Jesus above everything else; nothing else would do for her but to find the Lord. Oh, that every one of us, every believer, had this burning desire to find Jesus, to be with Him. She gets a wonderful message. There had never been a message like that before. Jesus says to Mary, “go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and to your Father, and to my God and your God.” She found them and conveyed the message.

At the end of the first day of the week Jesus comes into the midst and stands there. The disciples recognise Him this time. “Jesus came and stood in the midst, and says to them, Peace be to you”. Eight days later He came again. On two first days of the week, Jesus comes and stands in the midst. Jesus comes in through these closed doors.

Before Jesus died, He said, “If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.” And again, “I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you.” He said these things in response to the question, “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?” This is not Jesus standing and crying to the world; this is Jesus with His disciples. He comes to His own, comes to those who love Him, to those who have come together; He makes His presence known.

He says something; He shows them something; and He breathes into them. It must have been a marvellous experience which was not to be missed. Thomas missed it the first time but he was there the second time. Think of Jesus Himself coming into the midst. He says to them, "Peace be to you" twice. In the Old Testament we are told of people who say, "Peace, peace! when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11). But there is real peace now because Jesus has made peace by the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20). He comes to them and says, "Peace be to you."

It is a wonderful thing to get a fresh sense of the peace which flows from Christ. He also said, "Peace be to you" the next time He came. I think He realised His disciples needed a fresh sense of peace. I think we do too. There are many things that trouble us even as believers; personal things, household matters, business concerns, church matters. Jesus comes to His own and says, "Peace be to you". Everything is settled so far as God is concerned; everything is settled in the death of Jesus.

Then He showed them something, "...having said this he showed to them his hands and his side". It must have been wonderful to see His hands. They knew what had happened to those hands. They knew the way those hands had served them and washed their feet. They knew His hands had been nailed to the cross. They knew His side had been pierced with a spear. They actually saw the living Christ, out of death, not a spirit but a real, living Man. This would reassure their hearts. They had loved their Master and had followed Him for years. They lost Him for the time being when He was taken captive. It must have been tremendously reassuring for them when Jesus stood in the midst and they saw Him and heard Him.

Jesus said, "as the Father has sent me forth, I also send you. And having said this, he breathed into them." They receive a blessing to reassure them, to comfort them, to establish their hearts and to confirm to them that Christ was really alive. But it was not to stop there: "as the Father has sent me forth, I also send you." They were to go out from that circle with the breath of Christ, with the feelings of Christ, with the Spirit of Christ, and they were to do things as He did them.

I think they did. When the disciples spoke to Thomas, they did not give him a scolding for not being there, did they? They could easily have given him a

rough time, have told him that he ought to have been there. What they said was, “We have seen the Lord”. He made sure he was not missing the next time! In principle they did things with the breath of Christ. We need to learn to do this. As having the gift of the Spirit we should be able to do things with the breath of Christ, that way that He did things. As the Father sent Him forth, He sent His disciples so that they might not only say and do the right things, but say them and do them with the same spirit that Jesus had displayed. What a lot of sorrows would have been avoided among God’s people if these things had been so. Let us learn from them. Let us look at Jesus standing in the midst saying, “Peace be to you”, showing them His hands and His side to assure them He was really alive and sending them out with His peace and His breath to represent Him in the world where He is absent.

By coming again, eight days afterwards, I think He was also teaching them the value of the first day of the week and He was teaching them, too, that He would come to them not once, but again and again and again. I believe He still does. He makes Himself known. I do not mean that He is seen corporeally, but Jesus still comes to where He is loved, to where He is appreciated. He loves to make Himself known, freshly known, so that hearts are encouraged, cheered, and invigorated to go out and represent Him in this world.

Ken Hollands.

CHRIST KNOWN THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Philippians 1:21

When Paul says, “for me to live is Christ” he is not just making a fine statement; he is speaking from his own experience with the Lord. James asks in his epistle, “What is your life?” and then goes on to provide the answer: “It is even a vapour, appearing for a little while” (James 4:14). James speaks about life from the point of view of time and the world; here in Philippians, the apostle Paul tells us what the life of a christian should be. It is to be filled with Christ! When we first meet Jesus Christ as our Saviour it is to be the starting

point of a new path for each of us as following Christ. Each day of our life can be filled with Him, or each day filled with vanity.

I would like to express the understanding of my heart about this and maybe it will help some of you to understand that the Lord Jesus is to be the purpose and centre of our existence. For the apostle Paul, Christ filled his life. Paul could say, 'it does not matter what happens so long as in everything Christ is glorified.' Our Lord said, "If any one will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Some people think that christianity is merely the meeting with Christ as our Saviour, when by faith we receive Him in our heart, and receive the forgiveness of sins, but this is only the first step. To make our life meaningful and abundant we need to have the practical experience of knowing Christ as our Lord.

The apostle Peter encourages us to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). So, let us learn therefore how we may grow in grace in our everyday practical life. Alas, often the Lord Jesus occupies only a secondary place in our hearts and we only think about Him when we are in difficult circumstances, or when we suffer some affliction; then we turn to Him. But the apostle Paul wants to bring us to something much more, that the Lord Jesus should be the main meaning and the focus of our life.

Paul once stood bound in chains before King Agrippa and others, and he desired them to become like him and get the knowledge of Jesus. So in our days we need to follow the way which would lead us to a deep knowledge of Christ.

Let us also remember how the disciples came to a knowledge of Jesus Christ for themselves. "Philip finds Nathanael, and says to him, We have found him of whom Moses wrote in the law, ... and Nathanael said to him, Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael was full of doubts, but the answer was, "Come and see." (John 1:45, 46). We must each find out for ourselves who Jesus Christ is and what He would be to us. When Nathanael came to Jesus, the Lord looked at him and said, "Behold one truly an Israelite, in whom there is no guile." Nathanael asks in some confusion, "Whence knowest thou me?" Jesus replies, "when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." At that Nathanael exclaims, "thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." He finds that Christ is not just a prophet from Nazareth, but the Son of God,

the King of Israel. Every day Jesus would have us come to a greater appreciation of Himself.

I remember my own sorrows when one of my children suffered a haemorrhage when he was only four months old. I learned what the Lord could be to me. I spoke much to Him and He heard my prayers. I realised that He is the One who has power over life and death. The Lord leads us every day along a definite line to grow in the knowledge of Himself and through joys, sorrows, and different testings we grow in the knowledge of who He is and little by little our life is filled up by Jesus Christ.

Let us take another example from the scriptures. I am thinking of Lazarus. He became sick and his two sisters were very much concerned about him so they sent a message to the Lord. But Jesus waits and does not come in time to heal Lazarus. Then Jesus said, "Lazarus, our friend, is fallen asleep, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep. The disciples therefore said to him, Lord, if he be fallen asleep, he will get well. But Jesus spoke of his death". When Jesus approaches Bethany, Mary and Martha come forward separately and what did they each say? They say with confidence, "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died". Jesus says to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life" yet Martha did not understand and when the Lord commanded the stone to be removed from the tomb of Lazarus she said, "Lord, he stinks already, for he is four days there." But Jesus commands, "Take away the stone" and then He speaks calling this dead Lazarus, to "Come forth". And it is written that "the dead came forth". All saw the demonstration that Jesus is "the resurrection and the life: he that believes on me, though he have died, shall live".

It is very important that we use all eventualities to get this knowledge of who Jesus Christ is for us. When we are attacked by temptations, or by some disorder in our family, or our neighbours, or when we are slandered, can we think then, how is the Lord going to make Himself known to me in this? Can I in these and other sorrows flee to Him as to a strong tower and find consolation for my soul? Or, do we find ourselves in tumultuous agitation like the people who do not know God?

I would like to read another text from the scriptures: John's gospel chapter 6. This is what Jesus says about Himself, "As the living Father has sent me and I live on account of the Father, he also who eats me shall live also on account of

me.” Paul says in the text we read at the beginning “for me to live is Christ”; that meant that he fed on Christ. Paul says, “When the Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory” (Colossians 3:4). So I exhort you to see whether Jesus Christ fills your everyday life, whether when we are touched by sorrows and tribulations we find the Lord in them. Have we learned to see the Lord through the tears, to see Him standing and showing mercy, and making us whole? Paul proved this many times. In Acts we have the account of his sufferings. When they were on the journey to Rome you will remember that the ship they sailed was tossed by the stormy sea and all hope of their being saved seemed to be taken away. Everything possible was done; they even threw the cargo overboard, but in vain, and there was a complete darkness. In those extreme conditions an angel of God appeared to Paul and told him clearly that there would be no loss of life but only of the ship. Then Paul encourages all of them to take some food because, he said, ‘God whom I serve declared to me, “Fear not, Paul”’ (Acts 27:24). Imagine finding ourselves in such an extreme situation; what made the difference to Paul? His faith was in Christ. Though no visible help was provided, the apostle Paul kept on believing in Jesus Christ, and an angel is sent to him to encourage him and establish him in this.

I want now to draw on the life of Joseph. You all remember how Joseph was sold into Egypt and his brothers carried Joseph’s vest to Jacob and said, “discern now whether it is thy son’s vest or not... And Jacob... mourned for his son many days” (Genesis 37:32-34). Jacob was in great sadness because he had lost the one he loved. Later on, Benjamin had to go to Egypt, much against his father’s wishes, and Jacob says, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin! All these things are against me.” But the situation forced him to let Benjamin go. Let us pay attention to what happened. When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers and called them all to come to Egypt, they came back to Jacob with the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him and it is written that “the spirit of Jacob their father revived” (Genesis 45:27). Think of how many years the spirit of Jacob had been smitten. Joseph was a son whom he loved so much, whom he cherished in his heart and now, after so many dark years, they declare to him, ‘Joseph your son is alive, he rules over all Egypt’. The spirit of Jacob revived and he said, “I will go and see him before I die”. When he meets with Joseph, being now humbled, Jacob says, “I had not thought to see thy face; and behold, God has let me see also thy seed” (Genesis 48:11).

Dear brothers and sisters, may we also learn in our everyday life how to get the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Sometimes our life seems to be monotonous and yet this is our life, a life through which our Lord wants to reveal Himself to us so that we could say, as the apostle Paul, “and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). Amen.

Address given by a young Ukrainian believer.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

One comforting thought is that He who alone can pierce sinners’ hearts is named “the Comforter”. The Spirit who convicts us is also the Spirit who consoles. The same divine Spirit is both Wounder and Healer.

Charles H. Spurgeon

REPENTANCE

“they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn”
(Zechariah 12:10)

Repentance is not a preparation for looking to Christ. Do you not see that? The looking is put first, and the mourning afterwards. Yet you have said, ‘We must mourn for sin, and then look to Christ to pardon it.’ That is not God’s order. There will never be a tear of acceptable repentance in your eye till you have first looked to Jesus Christ. If you weep for sin without first fixing your gaze on Christ, you will have to weep again over your repentance, for it is in itself another sin.

Charles H. Spurgeon

FROM HINDUISM TO CHRIST

Dr. Kishor (Jimmy) Modha was born in Dar-es-salaam, Tanzania but after living in India for three years he came with his parents to England. His family were devout Hindus of the Brahmin (priestly) caste, which is the highest caste and bespeaks a spiritual purity and superiority. The family were proud of being Brahmins and gave themselves wholeheartedly to the practice of the Hindu religion, which included offering food sacrifices to the deities, chanting mantras (incantations), meditation and abstaining from eating meat and drinking alcohol to maintain purity.

My desire to know and understand God (Krishna, as I thought then) intensified so much during my early teenage years that I requested permission from my parents to join a Krishna ashram (Hindu religious community). They refused and encouraged me to complete my further education before renouncing worldly things to join an ashram. They informed me that seeking God was more fruitful in adulthood.

At the age of nineteen (October 1982) I went to the University of Surrey and embarked on a B.Sc. Hons course in microbiology. At University I became acutely aware of the hidden passions and desires within me, which were not so evident in the safe religious environment of home. A deep desire to taste the forbidden way of physical and sensual pleasure led me into an immoral and base lifestyle. Just like Solomon I denied myself nothing my eyes desired and refused my heart no pleasure (see Ecclesiastes 2:10). I became an educated reprobate, who, when at home, deceived his family as to his new-found lifestyle. However after a shameful and humiliating three years of dissipation, an overwhelming conviction of sin developed deep within my heart. It made me look heavenwards again and I began to think about God. I sought His mercy and forgiveness through all manner of Hindu practices. I burnt incense, chanted mantras and called on the names of many Hindu gods for hours. However the sense of sin only grew worse and I could not find peace. This led to disillusionment with religious rituals as a means of appeasing God.

I knew I was a sinner and could not meet God's perfect standards and began to question why He laid such a heavy burden on mankind who could not meet this standard of righteousness. During this period I no longer gave God one of the names of the Hindu gods but referred to Him as 'Almighty God'. All I knew

was that He existed, but where was He, and who was He? What was He like, and above all, would He give me a fresh start, a new clean heart? I stopped chanting mantras and started crying out to Him and seeking Him with all my heart.

During this period, now January 1986, I was invited to a Christian Union meeting by a fellow student. The guest speaker was going to expound on the death and resurrection of Jesus. I went along to the meeting and for the first time heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. As I listened to the speaker describing the brutal treatment given to the Son of God, my innermost being was stirred up. I kept asking myself—‘Why did they do this to a perfect man?’ I could not understand either why Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified, until the man explained. When I heard the answer that He died that we might have forgiveness of sins my heart nearly missed a beat. My thoughts became confused and a little voice inside me was beckoning me to surrender my life to Christ as the speaker made an appeal for repentant souls to receive salvation. I did not respond to this appeal by going out to the front but immediately left the building and went home to my bedroom. Then, for the first time in years, I knelt by my bed and prayed like a little child, confused, sad and sin-laden. I wept and wept confessing my sins to God and recall praying, ‘God, if Jesus is truly real, and if You can forgive me all my sins, then I give my life to You from this day on.’”

That night I fell into a deep sleep and had a powerful dream. I saw the risen, glorified Lord Jesus Christ. He walked up to me and showed me His pierced hands and gently spoke these words, ‘Jimmy, Jimmy, I have died for your sins’. After speaking these words, in my dream, He turned around and walked away. Almost immediately I woke up and was filled with unspeakable joy. The burden of sin had lifted and in its place was a deep sense of forgiveness and peace. I had found the peace beyond all understanding that the apostle Paul speaks of in Philippians 4:7.

Over the next few weeks I noticed that I had lost the desire for smoking and drinking and a love for the Lord Jesus Christ had settled in my heart. Also, an insatiable hunger to know the Lord drove me to read about Him in the Bible. It was then that I realised that I was renewed and I saw that Jesus had appeared to the apostle Thomas in the same way as He had appeared to me in my dream. Words cannot describe how free and joyful I felt as the days went on. I knew

that God had revealed Himself to me and that I was forgiven. I could not intellectually comprehend how, but I knew that Jesus Christ was God incarnate and that He was gracious and loving, unlike the Hindu gods I had once worshipped. I was lost and He came and found me.

Shortly afterwards I became aware that not all the English people who went to church and called themselves christians were actually believers. However there were some who understood what had happened to me and they too had the same love for Jesus that I did.

Following my conversion there was such a dramatic change in my behaviour and lifestyle that both my friends and my family noticed that something had happened to me. I was a new person and had become alive to Jesus Christ, but when my parents found out they took steps to quench my joy and destroy my new-found faith. I was forbidden to read the Bible, associate with christians or go to christian meetings, and for seven months I kept this up. But in my heart I still had a love for Jesus. After seven months of denying Christ and His Lordship over my life, I picked up my Bible again. I wept and wept as I read page after page of the gospels and of Jesus' love for sinful humanity.

In Matthew's gospel I was challenged by the following words of Jesus, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). In humility and repentance I surrendered my whole life to Christ and pledged to follow Him whatever the consequences. So in March 1987, I announced my determination to be a disciple of Jesus to my family. I cannot express the hurt and pain that the opposition from my family caused me. I was only 23 years old and it seemed to me that I had lost all, truly all, my family, my friends and my future to follow Jesus. But I was comforted by the words of the apostle Paul, who said, "But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ" (Philippians 3:7). Those words were true for me then and they still are today.

Jimmy Modha

"Jesus answering said, Verily I say to you, There is no one who has left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, [or wife], or children, or lands, for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, that shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time: houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the coming age life eternal." (Mark 10:29, 30)

THE LAMB OF GOD

Lamb of God! our souls adore Thee,
While upon Thy face we gaze;
There the Father's love and glory
Shine in all their brightest rays:
Thine almighty power and wisdom
All creation's works proclaim;
Heaven and earth alike confess Thee
As the ever great "I AM".

Lamb of God! when we behold Thee
Lowly in the manger laid;
Wand'ring as a homeless Stranger,
In the world Thy hands had made;
When we see Thee in the garden,
In Thine agony of blood;
At Thy grace we are confounded,
Holy, spotless Lamb of God.

When we see Thee as the Victim,
Bound to the accursed tree,
For our guilt and folly stricken,
All our judgment borne by Thee,
Lord, we own with hearts adoring,
Thou has loved us unto blood;
Glory, glory everlasting,
Be to Thee, Thou Lamb of God!

James George Deck 1838

JESUS, HOW GLORIOUS IS THY GRACE

Jesus, how glorious is Thy grace!
When in Thy Name we trust,
Our faith receives a righteousness
That makes the sinner just.

Vain are the hopes the sons of men
Upon their works have built;
Their hearts by nature are unclean,
Their actions full of guilt.

Silent let Jew and Gentile stand,
Without one vaunting word;
And, humbled low, confess their guilt
Before the righteous Lord.

No hope can on the law be built
Of justifying grace;
The law that shows the sinner's guilt

Condemns him to his face.

With Christ the Lord we died to sin;
With Him to life we rise—
To life, which now begun on earth,
Is perfect in the skies.

Isaac Watts

FORGIVENESS IN ITS THREE ASPECTS

From a divine standpoint there are three great consequences of sin:

the eternal consequences;
consequences relating to our practical enjoyment of fellowship with God;
and,
governmental consequences.

In regard of these three consequences of sin there are three aspects of forgiveness brought before us in Scripture; these are:

eternal, or redemptive, forgiveness;
restorative forgiveness; and,
God's governmental dealing with us even though our sins are forgiven.

At the very start of our christian course we get the first. Indeed Scripture does not contemplate such a thing as a believer without the forgiveness of sins in this aspect of it. The believer receives it as a repentant sinner, trusting in Him whose precious blood, in its changeless efficacy, has accomplished for us eternal redemption.

The second is that which the christian needs whenever he grieves the Holy Spirit by an allowance of evil. It is the forgiveness of a child who knows his relationship with the Father, but who has, for a time, lost the enjoyment of it through sin.

The third relates to the ways of God with His people here below. The term "government", in this connection, may at first sound unfamiliar to some; but my prayer is that the reader may not only be able to grasp the meaning of the term, but that its deep significance may, by the Holy Ghost, be brought home to his soul in power.

Eternal or Redemptive Forgiveness

There are four important questions in connection with this aspect of forgiveness, which God's word clearly answers:

- (1) how is it procured for us?
- (2) how is it received by us?
- (3) how is it assured to us?
- (4) what are its effects upon us?

Forgiveness procured

Many anxious souls make sad mistakes about this question. Some seem to have got an idea that earnest prayers and tears of repentance will procure forgiveness; others think that amendment in the future will procure forgiveness for the past. But such souls seem to forget that when God forgives us He can only do so in righteous consistency with His own holy character. Let them listen to scripture, and the answer to the question will be found distinct and plain enough. It is by the blood of Christ, and by His blood alone, that our pardon is procured. Nothing could righteously procure the forgiveness of our sins, but that which makes atonement for them. Compare the following verses:

“It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” (Leviticus 16:11)

“Without shedding of blood is no remission.” (Hebrews 9:22)

“This is my blood... which is shed for many for remission of sins.”

(Matthew 26:28.)

“...we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

(Ephesians 1:7.)

If anything else, nay, if everything else put together could have procured it, would not God have spared His blessed Son the shame and the suffering, the humiliation and judgment of the cross? When He cried in the garden, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” if, apart from His sacrifice and death, there had been such a possibility, would it not there and then have been manifested? Think of Him in that hour of agony, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood; think of His strong crying and tears, and let these words, “If it be possible”, sink deeper and deeper into your soul.

If our forgiveness could have been brought about by prayers and cries and tears, would not His prayers have procured it? And did they? No. All that took place in Gethsemane was but in anticipation of the atoning work on the cross. Oh, think again of those words, “If it be possible”. Think of what followed, upon the cross, and never again let the thought find place in your heart that anything but the blood-shedding of Jesus could procure your forgiveness.

If you were in a court of justice, under sentence of imprisonment, would standing to plead for forgiveness avail you anything? Would all your promises for the future wipe out one item of the past? If when justice claims that a penalty shall be inflicted or a debt paid and pleading words, good intentions, well-meant promises, and even the most genuine contrition will not clear you at a

human tribunal, how can you expect that they will procure your pardon before the throne of God?

Beside all this the Judge has spoken. God Himself has decided the point. In words too distinct and clear to be mistaken or reasoned away He has declared that, “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). No blood-shedding, no remission. Rest assured therefore that nothing short of the blood of an accepted sacrifice will do to secure the forgiveness of your sins before God.

But, thank God, He who claimed in righteousness has provided in grace and the provisions of the altar are equal to the claims of the throne. He who said, “It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul”, has also said, “I have given it to you upon the altar” (Leviticus 17:11).

Thus believers can say, “...we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7). Mark well those two blessed realities. The grace of God the source, the blood of Christ the means, of our forgiveness. The grace of God provides the Lamb, the blood of the Lamb procures the forgiveness, and the Spirit of grace proclaims it far and wide to sinners while the heart of God delights to bestow the forgiveness on a broken-hearted penitent. He abundantly pardons, He freely forgives. “When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both” (Luke 7:42).

That which met God’s claims and which exhausted the wrath due to us can never take place again. The consequences for the believer are eternal. Because of its unchanging efficacy, the application of the blood never need be repeated; the shedding of the blood never could be.

Forgiveness received

It is through the blood alone that forgiveness is procured, and through faith alone that we get it.

Grace provides;
 the blood procures;
 the Spirit proclaims;
 faith appropriates.

The moment we have faith in the precious blood of Christ, its full eternal efficacy is applied to and rests upon our souls; forgiveness through the blood is from that moment ours—declared to be ours by the Spirit’s testimony in the

Word. “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). “Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:38, 39). It is not through any proved merit of the past, nor any promised merit for the future, that we get it; but simply through faith in the work and merits of Another—of Him whom God has raised from the dead, in proof of His acceptance of what He has done. “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission (or passing over) of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God... that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:25,26). That is, before the death of Christ, God passed over the sins of believers on the ground of what was going to be done; and though it was “through the forbearance of God”, yet it was a righteous forbearance, inasmuch as it was in view of the one full payment to be made for them. Since the crucifixion, a believer is forgiven on the ground of the value of the blood which has been shed.

Forgiveness Assured

We can only be unwaveringly certain of anything as we rest with unwavering confidence on reliable evidence. We must have the needed information, and we must have it from a trustworthy source. For example, you may wish to go to some European town, and consult a guide book for information on how to get there but elsewhere in the Guide it is stated that the publishers ‘do not hold themselves responsible in any way for inaccuracies’. How could you in such circumstances be unwaveringly sure?

But when it comes to the gospel testimony, we must bear in mind that God Himself is the Author of it. “God hath spoken” (Hebrews 1:1,2). “The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:25). It is the gospel of God.

How distinct and clear are these divine utterances through the lips of the apostles Peter and Paul. For example, turn to Acts 10:43, “To Him” (Christ) “give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” Could anything be plainer?

Now turn to Acts 13:38,39, “Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things”. If, through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, and His precious blood, God declares that forgiveness is yours, “as God is true”, it is yours.

But perhaps you say, 'I fear my faith is too feeble to claim the blessing.' I only ask, 'Is it strong enough to make Christ Himself the object of your trust?' Is He your only confidence? Is His precious blood your only plea? Then, whether you think you can claim it or not, the word of God claims the blessing for you, and you have but to put your 'Amen' to it. "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins". "All that believe are justified from all things".

The testimony of one's feelings is as unreliable as the testimony of God's word is sure and though it seems so natural to cling to them, one could never depend upon inward emotions for an assurance of pardon.

If I had for the ground of my assurance, certain happy feelings and nothing else, who is to decide for me whether those feelings are those of a truly forgiven soul, or whether I am deceiving myself? Before my feelings could give me assurance, I should first need assurance about my feelings!

Let it not be supposed by this that we should either ignore or make light of feelings in their right place. On the contrary, every true believer experiences a feeling of joy and comfort when they are made sure of pardon—"joy and peace in believing". It is solid comfort, too, for there is a divine ground for our assurance. But it must be remembered that it is possible to have the feelings religiously wrought upon, and yet this divine ground to be lacking.

Take an illustration from history. The Duke of Somerset was beheaded upon Tower Hill in the reign of Edward VI. Just as the fatal moment was approaching, a mounted messenger in the service of the King came riding towards the scaffold. He had followed a number of officers who had ridden through the crowd in hot haste to the same place. The assembled crowd thought that the messenger had been sent to stop the execution and began to cry, 'A pardon, a pardon!' The shout was carried forward and reached the scaffold where it caused a flush of hope with the condemned duke. How must he have felt to have heard such news at such a moment? But whatever his feelings may have been, they were not of long duration. Though the news seemed good, it proved to be groundless. Popular opinion was mistaken. Though thousands of voices might have joined in the cry of 'Pardon', though the duke's feelings may have loudly echoed such a welcome report, King Edward did not send a message of pardon, so that all the rest was but a cruel mockery, just human imagination. The announcement was welcome, but it lacked one thing—royal authority.

If the assurance of our forgiveness is to be solid and lasting, we must get it from the highest authority—from the word of God, and when we do, the com-

fort of that assurance will be sure to follow. But never confound assurance with the comfort which naturally flows from it, nor imagine that any amount of comfortable feeling could give you solid assurance, though it must necessarily accompany it. Mark these two things well:

because God has spoken I am sure;
because I am sure I feel at rest.

The Effects of known pardon

Perhaps the most serious mistake that can be made as to the matter before us, is the notion that forgiveness can be known without its producing any effect in the life and affections of those who know it.

There are at least three great effects produced by the knowledge of forgiveness in the soul of the forgiven one.

It produces happiness. “Blessed” (or happy) “is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” The psalm which thus speaks of the forgiven man ends with gladness and a shout of joy (Psalm 32:1,11).

It produces love. “To whom little is forgiven the same loveth little.” The woman of the city who had the forgiveness of “many sins” “loved much” (Luke 7:47).

It produces fear. Nothing can move the soul to holy, jealous care like the forgiving love of God in Christ. “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared” (Psalm 130:3-4).

This is not a slavish fear. It is not a fear of losing His love, but of grieving it. It is a fear which has its very spring in the knowledge of a love that can never be either checked or changed, a love that spent itself on me when I was utterly degraded, irrecoverably lost and that shares its all with me now that I am eternally saved. Who would not fear to grieve such a love as this? “Who would not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?”

Restorative Forgiveness

There is a difference between not being able to see, and what is called losing our eyesight. A person who is suffering from the presence of a few particles of dust in their eyes may have no more real enjoyment of sight than a person who

is stone blind. Yet no one would therefore conclude that he has lost his eyesight. Remove the disturbing particles and he will see as well as ever.

In a similar way the christian may, through the coming in of evil, be as practically destitute of the enjoyment of his relationship with the Father as one who was never in it. But it is of all importance to see that the relationship still remains undisturbed. The relationship does not depend upon our enjoyment of it, but our enjoyment of it does depend on our walking in the communion of that relationship.

There is something deeply humiliating, and yet abundantly refreshing, in considering this part of our subject. Our shameful failures seem all the sadder in the light of the devoted love of Christ; yet instead of that love being diminished by those failures it only thereby finds a new way of displaying itself. So we read, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). Not content with taking our place in judgment, He will plead our cause in glory also. He will never give His people up. Never. What grace!

The work of the cross can never be repeated. Never again, as Saviour, will He take up the question of sin's judgment. That question was eternally settled for the believer when He cried, "It is finished". On the other hand, His work as heavenly advocate is not yet finished nor will it be until every believer is for ever beyond the reach of sin.

You will notice that it is when we sin, not when we are sorry for sinning, that He exercises His office of righteous advocate. It cannot be too firmly grasped that our repentance and restoration as believers are the *results* of His advocacy, and not their procuring cause. Oh, what a blessed, perfect, all-the-way-home Saviour He is!

This then, briefly, is His side of our restoration. Now come to ours.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

What could be more simple than this? How plainly it teaches that sin truly confessed to God is surely forgiven. And then, how solidly assuring are those two words, "faithful and just". How they remind us of the one righteous payment, of the never to be repeated settlement of the cross. If Christ had not righteously settled the question of our sins on the tree, He could not righteously have pleaded our cause on the throne. To plead for pardon without suffering

for the offence would be to ask God to pass by sin without judging it—an everlasting impossibility! But He has “suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God”; and therefore God is “faithful and just” to forgive us our sins the moment we confess them.

Alas! however the point of restoration is sometimes but slowly reached. Unjudged and unconfessed sin has produced cold reserve in the heart of the failing one and instead of open, frank confession, there is a guileful silence, although, perhaps, all the while God is manifestly dealing with us to bring about true restoration. It seems to have been so in the case of David (see Psalm 32). Listen to his own sad tale. “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” He was like a fever tossed patient, trying every possible posture, but finding rest in none. This restlessness is one of the principal signs of a saint out of communion; like the “troubled sea” he “cannot rest”.

Was not David’s restlessness, and is not the restlessness of many a saint since then, attributable to the same unjudged, unconfessed, hidden secret? But when the heart and the mouth are at last opened, how full and free the pardon! “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:5).

Should the reader happen to be one of that unhappy number described above, let me implore you, before going further, to get on your face before God; review the past under His holy, searching eye; confess your sins; judge yourself; hide nothing that is evil; spare nothing that is unworthy of Him whose holy name you bear. Do it now! Do it now! He will receive you freely. “He will abundantly pardon.” Do not imagine because you are restless and miserable that He has changed nor think that your failure has made Him less faithful. For even if “stripes” be needed to express His unchanging interest in you, and He be forced to inflict them, you will not receive one stroke too many and all you do receive will be direct proofs of His perfect love. See Psalm 89:30-34. “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Hebrews 12:6).

Governmental Forgiveness

Perhaps, there is no subject less thought of, and less understood even by christians generally, than the ways of God in government; yet how distinctly they stand out upon the pages of His holy Word, and of the history of His people in all

ages. Now it is certain that unless we grasp the thought of God's government, we shall fail to understand the meaning of governmental forgiveness. It will be necessary, therefore, first to speak a little of the former.

God's ways in government.

The broad principle of it is expressed in Galatians 6:7-9: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

There are certain consequences which follow certain lines of conduct in this world, and God permits them, both in the case of His own people and in that of unbelievers. Whatever a man sows he reaps. It is a well defined principle in the record of God's ways with men, and entirely distinct from grace. We shall see presently that a man may be in the full enjoyment of God's grace and yet be the subject of some governmental dealing at the same time and, moreover, that God can overrule the results of fleshly sowing to further the ends of His grace.

It may help us to understand more clearly the difference between grace and government to draw attention to the fact that when it is a question of government, a sin is not necessarily done with even when it is confessed.

'But', I can hear you saying, 'You have just shown us that it is done with—done with for ever!'

Yes. As a question of God's judgment upon it as guilt—i.e. as to the matter of our salvation—the sin just confessed was done with on the cross when Jesus said, "It is finished"; that is before it was even committed. Then, secondly, as to the enjoyment of our relationship, it is done with the moment, with a broken heart, we honestly confess it. But be it remembered all the same, that there is a sense in which it may not necessarily be done with; that is, in connection with God's government.

Here is a simple illustration. Take the case of a man who before his conversion was a confirmed drunkard. He makes a clean break with the world and his old habits, and for years goes on brightly. He grows in the truth and is used of God in preaching to others. In his employment he fills a position of trust. A few years roll by, and alas! his love begins to decline; his appetite for heavenly things decreases, while his relish for what is earthly and sensual increases; old tastes are afresh cultivated, old worldly associations, especially those of the

more refined type, become gradually revived. They do not in these circles consider him nearly so “narrow” as he used to be, and welcome his gradual return to their more convivial gatherings. One day he has been out on business, and in the evening he calls to see a friend—one of those semi-religious, love-the-world type of people so common in the present day. He is offered a drink, and though he at first refuses, with a little friendly pressing he takes it, and then a second also. The old thirst is so thoroughly revived by this that on leaving his friend’s house he slips into a bar parlour and drinks a great deal more, so that he can only stagger his way home. On the road an office colleague meets him and taunts him over his drunken condition. In a rage he strikes the colleague down and leaves him bleeding by the kerb.

He reaches home and goes to bed. Having slept off the effects of the alcohol he awakes. Imagine his mortified feelings as he says to himself, ‘Was I the worse for drink last night? Is it possible? Is it not all some horrid nightmare?’ His wife confirms the first part of his enquiry and he gets out of bed; and like a wounded worm writhing from the cut of the ploughshare, he lies prostrate on the bedroom floor, in anguish. How he lashes himself! How he loathes himself! No words can express the intensity of his mental agony. God’s ploughshare has entered his soul, and he reviews the past in His presence. He traces the varied steps in his spiritual decline; judges himself unsparingly; weeps over the sad dishonour he has brought upon his blessed Lord; confesses his sins, and is forgiven (1 John 1:9). But is the matter done with? Far from it. He receives a summons for assault. His employer, a worldly man, is shocked at such conduct from a professing christian and dismisses him. Nor is the reaping even now done with. For many a long day he is made to feel the effect of his worldly course. He is reaping what he sowed. Out of employment for months his wife suffers, his family suffers, and oh, how keenly he suffers! Then there is his testimony as a christian. What a blow it has sustained! And all this though his soul has been restored to happy communion with God.

Now this principle runs through the whole of the Bible. It is stamped upon the whole page of history, sacred and profane; it is interwoven in the affairs of nations; it makes its mark on families and on individuals; and, let even sceptics say what they will, it will be found that their own histories furnish no exception.

Take the history of the Jews since the death of Christ. They chose, on that momentous occasion, “a robber” in preference to Christ. “No king but Cæsar” was their cry. And how have the world’s ‘Cæsars’ treated them since then?

Read their history. Witness their treatment in modern times, even in cultivated, religious Europe and say whether they have not reaped what they sowed in preferring a gentile monarch or even “a robber” to Jesus. What nation has been robbed in such a wholesale way as they?

Again, they cried, “His blood be upon us and our children.” They gave thirty pieces of silver to a traitor to get rid of Him; and then, when poor Judas threw the money at their feet in bitter remorse, being too religious to put it in the temple treasury they bought a piece of ground with it, and called it “the field of blood”, a place “to bury strangers in”. Now where upon the face of the earth could you find a country of the same size that has been such a scene of bloodshed as the land of Canaan? It has for that guilty nation been indeed “a field of blood”. Could any other place be found where so many “strangers” have been buried as that land? Witness the crusades. How many thousands of the flower of Europe fell in those years of conflict! Yes, truly it has been a place “to bury strangers in”.

Take a case from the Old Testament. Adoni-bezek was one of the heathen lords of Canaan. The combined forces of Judah and Simeon made battle against him and took him captive, cutting off his thumbs and great toes. It seemed a very severe treatment, but there was God’s government behind it. Adoni-bezek was only reaping what he had sown, and his own lips are made to confess it. Mark what he said: “Three-score and ten kings, having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me.” (Judges 1:6,7). Be not deceived, ye stout-hearted, ye unconverted doing your own will. “God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Take again the history of one of the patriarchs. At his mother’s instigation Jacob killed a kid, and while he was entertaining his father with its flesh, he deceived him with its skin. Then a second bit of deception is practised. ‘To get a wife’, is the plea for Jacob’s hasty departure, although the real reason was Esau’s rage against him. Now mark first how the mother reaps. Her plan that Jacob should spend a “few days” with her brother Laban turned out to be a twenty years absence, and, as far as history records, she never set eyes again upon her beloved Jacob! Then when Jacob gets to Laban, he is called to reap what he has just sown. Laban deceived him in promising to give him Rachael. Jacob had taken advantage of Isaac’s darkness to deceive him, and now Laban takes advantage of the darkness of the evening to deceive Jacob.

It does not always follow, however, that we reap as quickly as this. It was many years after Jacob had killed a kid to deceive his father, that his sons killed a kid, and sprinkling its blood upon Joseph's coat, deceived him with it!

Turn now to the history of another Old Testament saint. David had stained his character and disgraced his throne by two of the darkest crimes of which man could be guilty (2 Samuel:11, 12). He committed adultery with the wife of one of his most faithful subjects, and then to cover his crime, planned the death of her unsuspecting husband. "Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword" (2 Samuel 12:9), is the charge subsequently brought against him. It was a kind of second-hand murder.

A year of apparent indifference on David's part follows. But was David's God indifferent? Far from it. Faithful Nathan waits upon the guilty king. The touching story of the ewe lamb is told, and David's anger is "greatly kindled" against the man. Could he possibly have a subject so base? (Wait and see, David!) "As the Lord liveth the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold...because he had no pity!"

It is wonderful how indignant we can be with other people's failings, and how marvellously tender with our own! But if we thought a little more of God's government, it would assuredly make us more tender with one another. For it is a principle of His government that "with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matthew 7:2). "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy" (James 2:13).

How little David weighed what he was saying, or guessed for whom he was legislating, until those four terrible words, "Thou art the man", fell upon his ears. Let them have issued as gently and tenderly as possible from Nathan's lips, they must have come like one of heaven's thunderbolts to his royal hearer's conscience. David is now reminded by Nathan of God's past kindness to him, of the many deliverances that had been wrought for him when Saul unrighteously sought his life, of the many favours He had bestowed upon him. Had He not lifted him from the sheepfold to the throne? And if that had been "too little" He would have given him still more. What had been his returns for such favours? He had proved himself a despiser of God's commandments, an adulterer, a murderer!

Such had been the guilty sowing; now for the righteous reaping: "The sword shall never depart from thine house". This opens David's lips, and from the depths of his inmost soul, and without a shadow of excuse for himself, he

bursts forth with honest confession, "I have sinned against the Lord". With equal promptness Nathan replies, "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die".

Ah! God is more merciful to David than David would have been to one of his own subjects. "Thou shalt not die". How "rich is his mercy", how abundant in mercy and truth is our Saviour God. Still there is the governmental side to be looked in the face. David had but re-echoed the claims of God's own government in Israel when he had said, "He shall restore fourfold" (see Exodus 22:1). It is true, the judgment of God for David's crime was to be borne by Jesus, the Lamb of God. It is equally true that David was restored to communion with God, restored to the joy of his salvation, and that he wrote many a precious inspired psalm after that. Yet the sword never departs from his house until he has restored "fourfold". David had pronounced the sentence; God would see it faithfully carried out.

First Bathsheba's son dies. One lamb has gone! Then David sees his own sin reproduced in his two sons; incest in Amnon is followed by murder in Absalom. Thus another lamb is gone! Then Absalom is slain by Joab's dagger. A third lamb is gone! Another still remains, and in him David appears to reap in a twofold way. Adonijah was apparently a good looking youth, and a favourite of his father's. David seems to have neglected to exercise the necessary rule and discipline in his own family circle, for we read, "His" (Adonijah's) "father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?" And we may be sure of this, that if a head of a house fails to exercise proper authority, somebody else will soon take the reins. This was sadly verified in the case before us. Adonijah says (before his father dies), "I will be king". What is the solemn sequel? At the command of Solomon (the son of Bathsheba) David's fourth lamb falls by the sword!

How deeply must David's heart have felt all this, for he lived to see at least three out of the four cut off by the sword, and the fourth on the way to it. Perhaps the bitterest part of all the results of our fleshly sowing is what we reap in the bosom of our own families!

The Lord grant His rich blessing to both the reader and the writer, and so deepen in our souls the sense of His holiness and love, that we may walk more softly before Him, cleave more closely to Him, and work the more heartily for Him, until the goal be reached.

George Cutting