

Living Water — Issue No 14

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MEEKNESS

| | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Matthew | 11: 28-30 |
| | 21: 5 |
| Psalm | 25: 9 |
| 1 Corinthians | 4: 21 |
| Galatians | 6: 1 |
| James | 3: 13 |

I have in mind, with the Lord's help, to speak of meekness and particularly of the way in which meekness is to affect our spirits. Meekness in scripture conveys the thought of gentleness, tenderness, and of what characterises someone who is not easily provoked.

The very first reference to meekness in scripture is in the book of Numbers. Moses is described there as the meekest man in all the earth. People had been speaking against him and in the same chapter in which we are told of God bringing in judgment against such persons we find that Moses is interceding with God for the effects of that judgment to be removed. That is the proof of the meekness of Moses. So with that in our minds may the Lord help us as we go through these scriptures. I feel for myself a greater need of demonstrating the spirit of meekness. It is part of the fruit of the Spirit as set out in Galatians chapter 5.

In considering meekness we need first to be occupied with the Lord Jesus who demonstrated it in perfection.

What meekness marked Him! In Matthew where we read, Jesus gives an invitation. "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart". Then it says, "and ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light". This was in complete contrast to the teaching and practice of the Pharisees who laid burdens on persons which were hard to bear. Here is One coming and saying, 'Come to me and you will find rest!'

If any of us desires to learn anything of meekness according to God, we shall learn it only as we come into the presence of the Lord. You might read about it and say 'Yes, I will be like that', but it will never happen that way. The only way in which meekness will be formed in us is the measure in which it is learned at the feet of the Lord.

“Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened”. I wonder how many in this room tonight are burdened! The invitation tonight from the Lord would be to “Come to me”. Maybe some here are still burdened with their sins. If you have not yet received the Saviour and have not the knowledge of the forgiveness of your sins you can receive it tonight as coming to Him with a humble and a contrite spirit. Do not hold out in the spirit of pride, maintaining that there is some good in you somewhere, because there is not!. Scripture is clear, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

How many times have you spoken against the Saviour? How many times have you maybe despised the gospel? Remember Jesus is meek and lowly in heart; if you draw near to Him He will listen. The scripture says, “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). What a wonderful Saviour we have!

Meekness came out in all His pathway here. We see it in the gospels in the way in which He drew near to different ones until finally the moment came when He entered into Jerusalem on His way to the cross. Matthew speaks of Him as the King but the feature he stresses is that of meekness. In chapter 9 of his book Zechariah speaks of rejoicing but Matthew in quoting from it makes no reference to rejoicing. No! The Lord Jesus was going to Jerusalem to die. At Calvary He was going to meet the dreadful condition that marks all of us as sinners under the dominion of Satan and at a distance from God. He was going to meet it by going into death.

In going to the cross Jesus was going to face accusations that were untrue. Most of us, I suppose, have read many a time of the awful trial of Jesus by Pilate and those who were there. Yet despite all the provocation it says that, “he opened not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). That was the meekness that was found when Jesus was taken by wicked hands and lead to the cross. He went that way for you and me. It is as we contemplate such scriptures that the hardness of our hearts can be softened. Even as believers in Jesus we can be hard-hearted. We can be thankful for the knowledge of forgiveness of sins; we can be thankful for the certainty of eternal security but it is possible—I know it in my own heart—to be hard-hearted. What is going to make us soft? The contemplation of the One who went into death and withstood so much against Himself. So many lies, so many untruths, were spoken about Him and so much false witness given against Him, yet “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and was as a sheep dumb before her shearers, and he opened not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7).

What did Jesus do when He came into Jerusalem? It says that He "wept over it" (Luke 19:41). Think of the meekness displayed in the fact that the Lord Jesus wept over the very city that was about to reject Him. He felt the indifference of man, the indifference of His own people. "He came to his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). Did He become hard? Did He turn away? No! He showed the most wonderful meekness of spirit. He was prepared to endure that mockery of a trial by Pilate as fulfilling His Father's will on the one hand and out of love for you and me on the other. As we contemplate the pathway of that precious One it would develop in us features of that One. How necessary it is that the features that mark our Saviour should now mark those whom He has saved. What a testimony is to be borne by groups and companies of believers on the Lord Jesus in the very world where He has been rejected.

The passage in the Psalms that we read shows the importance of having the desire to be meek. Psalm 25 tells us, "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way". We all need teaching and guiding as we go on our christian pathway and, according to this passage in the Psalms, the person who gets guidance and teaching is the one who is marked by the spirit of meekness. A spirit of pride or of knowing everything is one that the Lord is not pleased with.

How much we need guidance in judgment. Think for a moment of what is happening in the world at the present time and of what is happening amongst christians and amongst those who profess the name of Christ. Many things are said that are not right according to scripture. Therefore we each of us individually need to be able to judge rightly. It is no good relying on someone else to tell me what to do. We cannot be guided alone by what others may have said in the past, right though it may be. Guidance in relation to judgment of things here and my pathway through this world can only be by the Lord Jesus. To get the gain of that I must be marked by a meek spirit, one that is ready to be adjusted. Am I willing to be here in accordance with the way in which Jesus was here? I am beginning to see, far more than I have before, that the testimony that is borne in this world is really a continuation of what was demonstrated in perfection by the Lord when He was here. The church, which is His body, is left here in the world to be a demonstration to the world of the perfections of that blessed One. Some of us have to hang our heads in shame when we think of the things we have done in the past. But how thankful we are for the mercy of God. How thankful we are for His goodness that led us to repentance. Now the great thing is to be kept near to Him: "Come unto me, ... I am meek and lowly in heart".

Then it adds, "the meek will he teach his way". That is another great thing. In the beginning of the dispensation christians were spoken of as being "in the way". Now that way is still here. It has become more difficult to find because of the failure that has come in but that makes it all the more necessary that we should be taught the right way, the way to demonstrate what is according to God's heart and pleasure. If we are meek we shall be taught. If we are not meek we shall go on the way that we think is right and probably cause havoc.

Now when we come to the scripture we read in Corinthians we get a reference to the *spirit* of meekness. Despite all the serious problems there were in Corinth Paul was concerned not to come to them with a rod, which in one way would have been an easy thing to do, but to approach them "in love, and in a spirit of meekness?" He also speaks of sending Timothy to them "who shall put you in mind of my ways as they are in Christ" (v.17). Paul longed to come to them in love, and in a spirit of meekness. That is a challenge to the heart of each one of us. How do I approach things? When there is a problem is my first thought to go with the rod? Or is it "in love, and in a spirit of meekness?"

The scripture we read in Galatians shows that a spirit of meekness is needed to bring in healing and restoration. The problem in Galatia was much more subtle than that in Corinth. The Galatians were legal. To bring it down to the present day, no doubt the scriptures were quoted but things were added to enforce matters beyond the teaching of scripture. Paul felt it deeply because he knew the damage that it would do. He tells them in the verse read, "ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted."

How much damage has been done by the lack of meekness! In these last days of the testimony here the Lord Jesus is longing, and I say that with all reverence, longing that our hearts may be more filled with Himself, that there may be the demonstration of the spirit of meekness in the way that awkward problems are met and difficult matters judged. If that is not present there will be loss and God's heart will be grieved.

Now finally, I refer to the epistle of James. James is a very interesting book, written, I think, so that believers might be mature in their christian pathway. So he writes in chapter 3, "Who is wise and understanding among you; let him shew out of a good conversation" (or that can read 'manner of life') "his works in meekness of wisdom". Now that is a most remarkable expression especially coming as it does in this chapter which tells us about the damage that can be

done by the tongue. Anyone interested in wild animals will know that even quite vicious animals can be tamed but when it comes to the tongue, no one can tame it! James describes it as a "little member", but what damage it can do. Now it is in this very chapter where James speaks about the tongue and what goes with it, that he also says "Who is wise and understanding among you". That is a question I think that the Lord Jesus in His love for us would raise with each one of us. When the Lord sent out the disciples two at a time they were told to be as "prudent as the serpents, and guileless as the doves" (Matthew 10:16). There is a great need for wisdom and understanding in our christian pathway. We need to understand the Scriptures, understand their scope, not just to take a verse out of context but to understand its context. Perhaps I can pass on something specially for those younger ones who are here. When you are impressed with something in a meeting make a note of it when you get home; try to follow it through the Bible; it will help you to grow in spiritual things. Go to the Scriptures first. They never have to be changed. Every statement in scripture was given by divine inspiration and remains.

Then when we read the scripture we need to do so in a spirit of meekness. If we do not do so, I have found from my experience that we will not get very much from it. Read it in the spirit of meekness as if you are wanting to be taught right from the beginning. Do not approach with the view, 'I know all about this; I know just how this is applied, and I know all about the teaching of this passage.' Every time we take up the scriptures let us read them in the spirit of meekness, ready to be taught. I feel I need this as much as anyone.

James says, "Who is wise and understanding among you let him shew out of a good conversation" (or it can read 'manner of life') "his works in meekness of wisdom". I have thought for a long time over what "meekness of wisdom" might mean and my impression is that while we may have understanding in a matter it is the application of that understanding that really counts. I think that is what James is intending to convey. First of all there is our manner of life which is so essential. Even the world takes account of that. It is no good being one thing one minute and the next doing something directly opposed to it. Manner of life is most important. Then "let him shew out of a good conversation his works in meekness of wisdom". So the application of understanding and wisdom is done in the spirit of meekness and gentle, tender understanding. If you are ridiculed as a result of something you might say, do you retaliate? Or is this spirit of meekness in evidence?

Well, I feel I need this as much as any. May we know what it is to keep close to our Lord Jesus, to learn from Him, "for I am meek and lowly in heart". The same heart is to be found in the Lord Jesus now He is glorified as was found in Him as Man here. He has been into death and is now risen and glorified. His heart towards you and me and towards all is just the same as when He was here. We sometimes sing:-

*'But Thy love remains, that entered
Into death to make us Thine;
In that death all love was centred—
O the depths of love divine!*

So firstly, it is from the Lord Himself that we learn meekness. Then, scripture shows the importance of meekness if we are to be taught and shown the right way. Finally, meekness will be demonstrated, as in the last scripture, in "works in meekness of wisdom".

May the Lord use these scriptures particularly, along with the word spoken, to promote among His own a demonstration of the spirit of meekness for His glory.

Arthur Coldrick

JESUS STANDING — ON THE SHORE

John 21:1-12

In John 21 we see Jesus standing in early morning on the shore of the lake. It is an amazing chapter. Peter says, "I go to fish". Six others say, "We also come with thee". They did not ask the Lord! Away they go on their unsuccessful fishing trip. Jesus stands on the shore. He did not go to meet them in the boat. We can compare this with Luke 24. In Luke 24 two people go away from Jerusalem disappointed, upset, downcast. Jesus draws alongside them; He listens to them and He goes with them. We are told that He would have gone further! In John 21 He does not move one inch. "If we are unfaithful, he abides faithful, for he cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). Jesus stands on the shore.

These disciples in John 21 go away on their own. The history of christendom is full of unsuccessful expeditions! Think of things that have happened down through the centuries. Think of the Crusades and all the efforts that were put into such ventures. Did Jesus go along with that? He stood on the shore. Many other things have happened throughout the centuries. Yet the Lord is always there, always ready to welcome souls back. Down through the centuries people have found that the Lord is there.

Consider the Reformation when Luther and others freshly realised that “the just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). It was really like coming back to Jesus on the shore and finding that He was the Redeemer and that His work on Calvary was complete and finished. They returned to what remained firm and sure. Last century some christians freshly realised that Christ is the living Head in heaven and that there is one body here. It was coming back to the practical realisation of what had always been true since Pentecost. Jesus stands on the shore. The Lord has not changed. Down through all the centuries since the time He was here, He has never changed. There have been many changes with us. It is a great thing to remember if you are away off on your own ‘fishing trip’ that the Lord is always the same. You can come back to Him and find that He is the same Jesus whom you came to know, came to love, came to trust. The hymn says:

*‘And if I wander, teach me
Soon back to Thee to flee.’*

When we flee back to Him we find that He is the Same, the same lover of our souls, the same Lamb who went to Calvary, who died for us, the same Jesus who now lives on high.

Peter did not consult the Lord but went away on his own. How easy that is! Some of us were speaking about unity earlier. If christians go off on different ‘fishing trips’, it is very difficult to get them all together. The only way for them to get together is to get back to the Lord.

Seven disciples go away to fish and they had a rough night. “They... went on board, and that night took nothing”. “Jesus stood on the shore; the disciples however did not know that it was Jesus”. What does Jesus say to them in the circumstances? I know what some people would say! I had a boss once who used to say, ‘You are not often right, and you are wrong again!’ Jesus does not do that. He says, “Children”. Children! Think of the affection that came out in

Jesus. "Children, have ye anything to eat?" He then tells them what to do. Oh, to come under His direction. Oh, that everyone of us might do that more and more. As we seek to do anything for the Lord, let us come under His direction.

I do not know why Peter went off on the trip. Maybe he and others had good motives but they were unsuccessful. Once they come under the direction of Jesus the venture is a success. They come to Jesus and what do they find? When they come to land they find He has prepared a fire, and has fish, and bread. Jesus says to them, "Come and dine".

Think of Jesus standing there on the shore, ready to welcome them back, making them really feel at home. He even got them to bring of the fish that they had taken at His direction and add it to what He had already provided. He made things easy and comfortable for them. That is our Saviour! If we want to learn how to treat one another and any of God's people, John 21 is a very good study for us. Think of the way Jesus did things. What a great pattern Jesus is for us as He stood on the shore, not chiding, not rebuking, but providing. I know that later He searches out and adjusts Peter, but only after Peter has been warmed and well fed. Then, after He adjusts him He says, "Feed my lambs", "Shepherd my sheep", "Feed my sheep". Peter is adjusted in relation to his own link with the Lord and then the Lord makes sure that Peter is available to serve others.

Let us think of Jesus standing there at the lake of Gennesaret. It shows, I believe, that He is ready to welcome any individual or companies who go away on their own and leave Him out. He is the same Jesus today as He was when John wrote. Let us love Him more. Let us praise Him more. Let us worship Him more. For His name's sake.

Ken Hollands

Gentleness of tongue is a tree of life; but crookedness therein is a breaking of the spirit. Proverbs 15:4

FOUR LESSONS FROM PHILIP THE APOSTLE

Apart from the lists of the names of the apostles there are only four references to the apostle Philip in the gospels. I wish to make four points from those references to Philip which I believe bear on the bedrock of christian experience for every believer.

“Jesus finds Philip” (John 1:43)

Philip lived in the same place as Andrew and Peter but they did not find Philip and bring him to Christ. You and I may not expect the Lord Jesus, in His sovereign actions, to bless certain souls. We might not think of them. But the Lord does not forget! “Jesus finds Philip”. Does that touch a chord in each heart here, that we have been found by Christ? Think of the lovely hymn by Toplady, ‘Rock of Ages’ and the line in it:-

‘Found by Thee before I sought’.

Toplady was an educated man living in London who one year went on a holiday to southern Ireland; there, in a barn, he heard the gospel preached by an old farm labourer. That was the night when Jesus found him. ‘Found by Thee before I sought’. He said, ‘God had to take me to southern Ireland to save my soul for all eternity.’ It is a wonderful thing to be found by Christ. He is seeking that which is lost.

You are either found by Christ or you are lost. There is nothing in between! If Jesus has not found you, and won your soul and poured His love, grace, forgiveness and peace into your heart then you are lost!

“Jesus finds Philip”. What wonderful grace on the part of our Lord. I trust and pray that every one of us has been found by Christ. We did not find Him; the gospel came to us. The light of His love, the grace of His work, the mercy of His heart came to us when we were sinners, and He found us!

“Jesus then, lifting up his eyes and seeing that a great crowd is coming to him, says to Philip, Whence shall we buy loaves that these may eat? But this he said trying him, for he knew what he was going to do.” (John 6:5-6)

Jesus does something in this section of scripture that He does not, I think, do anywhere else. He asks a disciple what He should do! “Jesus... seeing that a great crowd is coming to him, says to Philip, Whence shall we buy loaves that

these may eat?" But, scripture adds, "this he said trying him, for he knew what he was going to do". The Lord wanted Philip to know that no matter what circumstances he was in, he could trust implicitly in Jesus. We are to learn the same lesson. We can trust Him in any sorrow, problem or difficulty because He knows what He is going to do. He wanted Philip to understand that there was no circumstance that could arise in Philip's life or family or in the testimony here that He was not conversant with and which He did not know how to solve!

Paul says, "I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound. In everything and in all things I am initiated both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer privation. I have strength for all things in him that gives me power." "Not that I speak as regards privation, for as to me I have learnt in those circumstances in which I am, to be satisfied in myself." (Philippians 4:12,13,11). Paul's confidence and strength was in Christ, in His love, in His perfect knowledge of everything about him. When we think of our lives and families, our problems and what may lie ahead, we need to have absolute confidence in the One who knows what He is going to do. He knows as He has always known. We can rest with absolute confidence in His precious hands. Behind His hands lies His heart and He loves us with an unchanging love. Do not forget that. In His dealings with us, however severe they might be, behind them lies His heart. His hand moves at the dictates of His heart.

"But Jesus answered them (Andrew and Philip) saying, The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. ...Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit" (John 12: 23-24).

"If it die, it bears much fruit". This is the last Passover, and there are Greeks who wish to see Jesus. The Lord Jesus has already been marked out in this gospel as the Son of God, the One who raised Lazarus by His power. "He had called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from among [the] dead." This section shows us that He is also Son of man, taking manhood's form in order to die. He is the heir to everything on the earth and everything in the heavens. It is God's purpose "to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth" (Ephesians 1:10). But first He must die, be raised, and appear with His much fruit. I want every christian here to understand that the display of the full glory of Jesus is reserved to the day of His appearing. It was not the time for Him to be revealed to the Greeks (the gentiles). It was not and is not the day of display. If any of us has any understand-

ing of Jesus it has been sovereignly revealed to us in the day of His public denial and rejection.

The day of His public glory is still to come. The great lesson for every one of us to learn is that glory waits until the rapture and the appearing. It is not the day now when Christ is publicly glorified. He is not seen yet by the nations as the Son of Man; that day is coming. There will be a day when every knee shall bow and "every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory" (Philippians 2:11), but it is not today! Each believer needs to understand that.

Let us be encouraged; the day of display is coming but we are not in it at the moment. If we really understood that we would look for nothing here. We would expect nothing here; we would not be disappointed when things go wrong. The whole world lies in the wicked one (1 John 5:19) under judgment until the day when Christ comes. If He had not died, God's granary would be empty for all eternity. "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit". Jesus gave His own life. (No one took His life from Him; the Lord gave His own life.) "But if it die, it bears much fruit". Think of the immensity of the answer from His death but it awaits the day of display.

Jesus says to him, Am I so long a time with you, and thou hast not known me, Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father..." (John 14:9)

This is a most vital point of christianity. We live in a world where everything is put on the basis of comparative religion. This scripture makes it abundantly clear that Christ is God. There is no one else. I draw your attention to the fact that these words of Jesus are spoken only a very short time before His death. There are only a few hours between chapters 12 and 19 of John's gospel. Philip, at this late hour, needed to be certain of who Jesus is. He says "Lord, show us the Father". How tenderly and graciously the Lord reveals this profound truth in answer to Philip's question. Jesus says, "He that has seen me has seen the Father". Christ was there, God manifest in flesh!

The Lord said, 'If you do not believe my words, believe for the works' sake'. Even the Pharisees and Sadducees had some inkling, which they would not admit, of the glory of the One who was there. Paul speaks about the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily (Colossians 1:19, 2:9). It was hidden by the veil of His flesh. In the tabernacle system the curtain, the veil, hid the glory

of what was there inside. I marvel that the ark of the covenant, the ark of God, stood on the sand of the desert. There was no floor in the tabernacle; the ark stood on the sand. Think of the glory of the Manhood of Jesus. He became weary; He was thirsty; He even became deeply depressed as the time of the cross drew near yet He was Emmanuel, God with us. Let us never move from the wonderful glory that Jesus is God.

What patience and grace the Lord had with His disciples. We have their questions and mistakes revealed to us on the pages of scripture. We can learn from what Philip says and we can find that as the Lord Jesus had grace with him, so He will have grace with us, every step of the way until we see Him face to face.

Let us remember these four things:

Jesus finds us;
Jesus is equal to every situation; we can have absolute confidence in Him;
The day of display is not now, but it is coming; and
Jesus is God.

These are profound things; may they be bedrock in our souls and steady us in our walk and ways for His pleasure and glory.

Philip Robinson

‘HELP OF THE HELPLESS O ABIDE WITH ME’

(A word at a burial meeting)

“Having said these things she turned backward and beholds Jesus standing [there], and knew not that it was Jesus.” (John 20:14)

There is nothing like being in the presence of death to make us all feel our utter helplessness. We are in the presence of a power that is beyond us. When we come together to an occasion like this it is a tremendous comfort to know that there is Someone standing by. We often feel very alone and most in this room

have known what it is to be in circumstances where they felt helpless and alone. When we come to an occasion like this we have a tremendous sense of our need of someone to stand by us and I want to convey to the heart of everyone here that the Lord is available to stand by every soul that feels their need of Him today.

Mary of Magdala was at the tomb of Jesus and she did not understand why things were the way they were. Mary did not understand what was happening; she was confused as to the circumstances that had arisen over the death of the Lord. But the Lord, in His love, is standing there to give her the assurance that nothing had happened outside of His control and that His perfect ordering and love had been behind everything. He stands by and draws out her love for Him through those very circumstances in which He has placed her so that she might know what He can be to her.

I believe that every circumstance is allowed so that we might feel our need of Him and realise what He can be to us. I trust everyone in this room knows what it is for Christ to be their Saviour. If that is not so then He is available to you now. Christ was available to Mary of Magdala in circumstances where she felt absolutely lost; the One she loved had gone; everything in her life that she had lived for seemed to be there no longer; she had lost Christ!

At a time like this the Lord would in His grace say to our hearts 'Do you not know that my compassions are new every morning? Do you not know that my grace is sufficient for you?' That is what Christ would provide for the heart of everyone that feels their need of Him. While at this time we would have particularly in mind those that mourn, I would like to suggest to everyone that we are here because we feel the loss but there is One that can fill that loss for you; our Lord Jesus is able to do it. He has brought us into the very circumstance where we are today so that He might become increasingly precious to our hearts.

The apostle Paul in writing to the Philippians told them, "For me to live [is] Christ, and to die gain" (Philippians 1:21). We are very conscious today that for the believer in the Lord Jesus 'to die is gain' but let it be the resolve of everyone of us that our lives will be committed to Christ—to be here for Him, because He has done everything for us. At a time when we feel we need Him so much we can prove His power. May there be blessing for every one of us.

Keith Wickens

O BLESSED LORD, WHAT HAST THOU DONE!

O blessed Lord, what hast Thou done!
How vast a ransom paid!
God's only well-beloved Son
Upon the altar laid!

While our full hearts in faith repose
Upon Thy precious blood,
Peace in a steady current flows,
Filled from Thy mercy's flood.

What boundless joy will fill each heart,
Our every grief efface,
When we behold Thee as thou art
And all Thy love retrace.

Unseen we love Thee, dear Thy Name!
But when our eyes behold,
With joyful wonder we'll proclaim
The half hath not been told!

Mary Bowly

THERE'S A WIDENESS IN GOD'S MERCY

There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice
Which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind;

But we make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own;
And we magnify His strictness
With a zeal He will not own.

If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord.

F. W. Faber (1814-1863)

THE ADVOCATE OR THE ACCUSER

Whose Side Do You Take?

This is a practical question for christians in these days. It is not a question of whether we are christians or not, though it may often test the fact. Happily, simple faith in the Person of the Son of God and His work settles that question:

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31);

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36);

“Being now justified by his blood” (Romans 5:9).

There are numerous other passages with the same message.

But the question is, as professedly saved ones, do we side with the Advocate, or with the “accuser of our brethren”?

The advocacy of Christ is founded on His righteous Person, and His perfect work (see 1 John 2:1–2). His work clears us from all the guilt of our sins, and in His Person we have entire deliverance from our old state, He Himself—the dead, risen, and ascended One—being our righteousness before God. It is on this ground that He intercedes, does the work of an advocate. If we sin after we have been brought into relationship with the Father as His children, the Advocacy of Christ applies.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1–2).

The office of the Advocate then is not to get righteousness for us, nor to put away our sins, nor to make us children. That is all settled by Christ's death and resurrection, by faith in Him. For it is written:

“...this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God: from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:12–14).

The service of the Advocate is therefore to maintain us as children before the Father without sin, after we are justified, in face of the “accuser of our brethren” (see Revelation 12:10). When a child of God sins, communion is inter-

rupted; the relationship remains, but the Father has no fellowship with the sin of His child. The Advocate pleads against Satan who accuses. The Father hears the pleadings of the Advocate, who therefore applies the word to our walk (John 13:4-5) and brings us to the confession of the sin, upon which the Father is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Thus communion is restored, and the child of God walks in the joy and light of His Father's face. Thus the Advocate is literally the Manager of our affairs in our Father's court and has reference to the government of His children in this world. It reconciles the fact of a naughty child and a Holy Father. (Compare 1 Peter 1:17).

The Advocate does two things. He pleads with the Father for us. He applies the word to us. The one maintains our cause, if we sin, before the Father, against the accuser. The other brings our practical state up to our standing which is always maintained without sin by the righteous Advocate who has made propitiation. The failure in our practical state is a consequence of our having the flesh still in us:

"So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (Romans 7:25).

And though by faith, and in spirit, we are no longer in the flesh, yet actually it is in us, hence the failure. There is no excuse, but the fact is that we fail. Our standing as children ever remains the same, even though we sin, owing to the righteous Advocate who has made propitiation. "If any man sin, we have an advocate." But we have failed in our walk. We are defiled. We stand forever cleansed from our sins by the blood of Jesus. It never needs to be applied again, see Hebrews 10:12-14; 1 John 1:7. We have ever thus access to God for worship. Our bodies are also washed in pure water, (Hebrews 10:22); we have had once the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5); we are born again (John 3:3); we need not then to be put into the bath over again. But we have sinned; we have got our feet defiled as it were in passing through this sin-defiling world. This will not do for the Father's presence. What does the Advocate do? He applies the word to us; by it He washes our feet. The word of the Lord leads us to confession and self-judgment. The remembrance of our Advocate who made propitiation leads us back on our knees to our Father who forgives us and cleanses us from all our unrighteousness. Thus the blessed work of the Advocate is on the one hand to plead for the children before the Father, if they sin;

on the other hand, to wash their feet with the word, to bring their practical walk and state up to their standing before Him.

Satan, on the other hand, is the "accuser of our brethren". He accuses them before God day and night (Revelation 12:10). The accuser is the author of divisions between the children of God, by accusing them one to the other (Romans 16:17-20). The accuser would hire a Balaam to curse the people of God, and failing in that he would use the same prophet to teach Balak to mix them up with the nations around and partake of their sinful practices. Satan tempted David to sin in numbering the people of Israel (1 Chronicles 21:1). The accuser would resist Joshua the high priest, and seek to prevent his filthy rags being taken from him, and his being clothed in new garments. (Zechariah 3:1). This is the accuser's wretched work. Those that follow him are called false accusers, slanderers (literally devils), because they are doing the devil's work. The devil whispers in the ear of a minister's wife (1 Timothy 3:1) some false story about some brother or sister in Christ. She spreads it about, and so the evil spreads, which perhaps may end in an assembly being broken up. Some aged sister sits leisurely at home (Titus 2:3) and not having much to do is ready perhaps to hear stories from some worldly person about some child of God. She spreads it to others who come to see her. It is a slander, a lie, so the devil does his work, and perhaps some child of God gets a wound or gets hindered in the work of the Lord for years.

I would solemnly ask each child of God who reads this paper: 'On whose side are you working?' When some evil is uttered about some child of God, do you plead for him, go home and pray for him; if you know he has failed, do you go in love and humility, and take the word to him, and wash his feet (John 13:14)? This is the blessed work of the Advocate. Or do you listen to the story, go and spread it lightly to someone else, without knowing whether it is a fact or not? And if you are hurt by some brother, do you go in a pet to God and pray in anger at him at prayer meetings (1 Timothy 2:8), and accuse him? This is to do the devil's work.

But how happy it is for us to be associated with the blessed Advocate, on the one hand pleading for our brethren if they sin, on the other hand carrying the word to them and washing their feet. May the Lord grant His people increasingly this grace, so that the saints may see their blessed privilege of love to cover sins (Proverbs 10:12), plead for their brethren if they sin, and act in faithfulness to them, in carrying the word to them, washing their feet, so that they might be cleansed from their defilement; these last overcoming the ac-

cuser by the blood of the Lamb, on the one hand if they sin, and on the other hand openly resisting him by the word of their testimony like the blessed Lord Jesus Himself. He answered the devil when tempting Him to sin by: "It is written". So should we. If we sin thank God we can always answer him by the blood of the Lamb which is balm for every wound. Thus the blood of the Lamb and the word, the sword of the Spirit, are our instruments against the devil down here, while our Advocate maintains our cause before the Father up in heaven. Thus in every case we are maintained and are overcomers, more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Adalbert P Cecil (1841-1889)

A SINNER SAVED BY GRACE

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" (Ephesians 2:8).

The day began as many others previously with nothing to show that something would occur that would change the course of my life for ever. I do not remember what precipitated the discussion between my wife and myself but it is sufficient to say that it developed into a full-scale argument, largely due to my own pride and selfishness. I found that my anger was so great that as on many previous occasions I stormed out of the house and got into the car to drive to a quiet spot and calm down. We were living in Hampstead Garden Suburb at the time but, having got into the car, instead of following the road out to Hendon I turned towards London's West End.

I was so confused that I did not really notice where I was going and eventually I found myself near to Earl's Court. When I realised this I immediately tried to turn for home and to do so I had to traverse the one-way system up Earls Court Road to the Hammersmith fly-over, taking the inside lane in order to do so. There was a policeman on duty outside the gates to Earl's Court Stadium directing traffic into the Billy Graham Crusade (1962). This was not for me! I had no intention of going there so I indicated my wish to take the centre lane to reach the fly-over. The policeman shouted at me and would not allow me to do this, directing me into the stadium grounds. I immediately tried to get out but

all the exit gates were locked, so as I had no hope of getting out I went in and watched the proceedings. I left two hours or so later completely unmoved though large numbers of persons went forward to make a commitment.

I arrived home somewhat subdued, but though my dear wife had waited up for me, I was not going to apologise to her. In the morning she noticed a leaflet sticking out of my pocket and was surprised to see that I had been to the Crusade. I did not explain what had happened; I was too proud to do that. My wife noticed that the leaflet I had picked up showed that there was a family meeting at Earl's Court later in the week and suggested that we should go as a family. This was not for me—once had been quite enough—but I agreed to go, partly to repair the damage in our relations which I had already caused. I insisted though that we would go early and sit near an exit so that we could leave as soon as the service ended.

We went and sat as I suggested. The end of the rally came and the preacher made his request for those who had taken in the message from John's gospel to go forward. I stood up to leave as I had no intention of going forward but as I watched those who were going forward I had the impression that instead of Billy Graham inviting me it was Christ Himself who was asking me to commit my life to Him. I could not refuse Him, so with tears we all went up together to commit my life to Christ. This was a great joy to my family who had been believers for a long time.

From that moment we began a new life together, happy in the knowledge that "by grace ye are saved through faith" and knowing also that "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). I was the lost sheep who had been found by the good Shepherd who had come to find me and bring me into His glorious kingdom. "With God all things are possible". The Son of God has put a new song in our hearts, praise His glorious name.

My wife is now with the Lord but it is thrilling to know that she is in His presence and that one day we also shall be with Him for all eternity.

Paddy Murphy

THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL

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| Psalm | 130: 1-4 |
| Romans | 5: 1-2 |
| Galatians | 5: 1, 13-15 |
| Ephesians | 4: 30-32 |

In reading these passages I desire to convey something of the blessings of the gospel. There is a tendency to restrict the blessings of the gospel to unbelievers. We seek to use the preaching on Lord's Day and the open-air preaching, day by day, to reach unbelievers, which is right and I trust that exercise may be stimulated both in our personal lives and in our localities. But I do believe, and I am increasingly convicted of it, that believers need the gospel; they need not the terms only but to be in the gain of it. This would involve not only receiving the statements and the truths of what God is freely offering, but so to receive those blessings and so to work them out together that there is fruit amongst the Lord's people and an increase of responsive praise and worship to the Lord and to God.

It is striking to see in Paul's epistles that whether he is exhorting, adjusting or encouraging the saints, he nearly always introduces some fundamental teaching of the truth of the gospel as the basis of his exhortation and, in particular, presents the Person of the Lord Jesus. I think it has been well said that the character in which the Lord Jesus is presented in the epistles gives a colour and a character to that epistle.

Tonight I desire in a simple way to encourage all here to be in the present gain of some of these blessings I wish to touch upon.

Forgiveness

The first of the blessings that I wish to draw attention to is forgiveness. Now I want to ask you all this question, "Do you all enjoy the forgiveness of sins?" Is everyone here consciously in the gain and the blessing of forgiveness? Well, you can be, because God is toward us; His heart is toward us in forgiveness. Where we read in Psalm 130 it says, "there is forgiveness with thee," that is, with God, "that thou mayest be feared" (Psalm 130:4). If our iniquities were marked up, if God marked our histories, where should we stand? Where would any one of us be if there was not this wonderful outshining of God's heart in forgiveness?

“There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.” How forgiving God is! God’s disposition is one of forgiveness and He is favourable toward us tonight. You may know about God’s forgiveness; you may have read about it in the Bible but do you know God for yourself as a forgiving God? His desire is that “all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). God has in His heart and mind that all should be in the gain of forgiveness. May we be maintained in the spirit of forgiveness too. If God’s attitude is that towards me it is also to be my attitude towards my brother. But firstly, plenary, or unqualified, forgiveness is with God. That is God’s right. He has a righteous basis to forgive. Everything has been righteously met. God’s righteousness has been maintained and yet He is a forgiving God. He can forgive the sinner. Oh, dear sinner, tonight, be in the gain of the forgiveness of your sins. May our hearts be softened, and if there is one here who may be suffering with a bad conscience on account of sin may you come tonight to the full assurance of the forgiveness of sins. You can be clear in your conscience and clear in your link with God. The hymn says: ‘Not a cloud above, not a spot within.’ That can be your experience.

Let it not be merely a doctrine but a current experience. God is “rich in mercy” (Ephesians 2:4). He desires that every person might be in the blessed gain of forgiveness. If you are not aware of it, put your faith in the finished work of Jesus, in His precious shed blood; find the Saviour tonight.

The apostle Paul said, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first” (1 Timothy 1:15). Well, what can anyone of us say about being the first, or the chief of sinners? Paul said that, but what rank are you in? Second rank? Third rank? The Lord Jesus spoke about two persons, “When they had nothing to pay, he forgave both of them their debt” (Luke 7:42). Both of them! Whether it was a big sinner, or a little one, both were to be forgiven. The forgiveness of sins is to be our present experience. God is outshining towards us in the blessedness of forgiveness.

Favour

From Romans chapter 5 I desire to say a word about “favour”. I believe if we are in the gain of forgiveness, we would normally move in our experience into the sense of the favour of God. God is outshining toward us in grace and in His favour, and I believe the apostle here is helping the believers in Rome, and ourselves tonight, by a laying out of the teaching of the gospel, to enter into the blessedness of God’s favour. I wonder if we are conscious of being in God’s favour? Are you ashamed? Is there something in your history or your life

currently about which you are ashamed, and you fear to face God so that you cannot enjoy His favour? It says we have "access by faith into this favour in which we stand". It is a wonderful thing to be in the favour of God. God has one Man before Him. We are justified in that glorious One. It tells us where we read that "having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom we have also access by faith into this favour in which we stand". It is not, 'hope to stand', or 'will eventually stand', but "in which we stand". I believe the favour of God is to be our current experience.

It is all linked with the wonderful truth of the kingdom. You might be familiar with the line of teaching that Mr. Raven helped us to understand in Romans chapter 5. He said it is the kingdom, the new covenant, reconciliation and eternal life. You can trace those truths in this chapter. But the few verses read bring out the great matter of the kingdom. I believe we are to stand firmly in the favour of God's kingdom. That is, God has His rights, and God has a sphere where those rights are maintained and owned. It involves the exaltation and glorification of Jesus. Not only does it say that He has "been delivered for our offences" but that He "has been raised for our justification." The Lord Jesus Christ, raised and exalted at God's right hand, attests to God's righteousness. In the death and burial of Jesus righteousness was accomplished, but He lives at God's right hand! And God has an order of things centred in Jesus that relates to a moral, stable and eternal order and "we have peace". It has been well said that righteousness is the moral basis of God's kingdom, peace is the principle of the kingdom (that means there is security and rest and safety), and grace is the rule or the sway of the kingdom. I believe that God would have these wonderful blessings to be consciously known in the life of every believer.

I trust that all are in the conscious sense of being in the favour of God and that no one here feels that they do not belong, that they are out of favour. When Esther was to approach the king it says that, "the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand" (Esther 5:2). This was because "she obtained favour in his sight"; the disposition of the king was toward her: it was propitious. God's favour is toward us too; it is in our Lord Jesus Christ and we are to have the present sense of being part of His kingdom. We are to come over from sin's rule to the wonderful rule of Christ in order that we might find grace reigning in our hearts through righteousness unto eternal life. I believe these blessings are the gain of being in the kingdom. There is peace, security and righteousness. Would not the kingdoms of the world desire to offer such wonderful things to men and women and children—righteousness and peace and grace?

God has established this moral order of things and He desires that we might be in the gain of it. May we give place in our hearts and minds to the gracious service of the Holy Spirit in view of being attracted over into the gain of these blessed things that are opened up to us in this epistle to the Romans. I commend this section to you; not only has Christ died, not only has He been delivered for our offences, but He has been raised again in view of our being clear of every charge, so that we may be brought consciously into the favour and the blessing of another world in which the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head and Centre.

Freedom

Turning now to Galatians, I desire to say a word about freedom. It is a wonderful thing that we have been set free. What principles of bondage tend to hold us! One of the things that comes out in chapter 4 is that there are two lines: one is bondage, that is the principle of Hagar and her son, and the other is the line of liberty or freedom, belonging to Jerusalem above. Ishmael and Isaac had the same father, but Ishmael's mother was a bond-woman and Isaac's mother was a free woman. I believe we take character from our mothers. The apostle brings out that one leads to bondage and the other to liberty or freedom. In summing up, Paul says "Christ has set us free in freedom".

Galatia was a province or a county, not just one meeting, and there was a poison working there, the poison of legality. The apostle was seeking to bring them over to the true line of liberty, the true line of sonship seen in Isaac, in contrast to the niggardly elements of lawkeeping and demand. He says, "stand fast therefore". May our feet stand firmly in the liberty that God has brought us into through Christ.

"Christ", he says, "has set us free in freedom". It is a double emphasis. In John's gospel the Lord says, "If therefore the Son shall set you free, ye shall be really free" (John 8:36), and that is the appeal in this scripture, I believe, that we are to be free of the legal elements of demand. "Be not held again". You see, the danger was that they were slipping back. He says, "ye ran well", 'you have been in liberty; you have known what it is to be free of bondage.' The tendency was to revert to a line of demand and lawkeeping, when the Holy Spirit's line was one of liberty, blessing and sonship.

In verse 1 Paul says, "Christ has set us free in freedom". He links himself with the Galatians but in verse 13 he says, "ye have been called to liberty, brethren". He makes the thing real; he brings it home to the conscience and the

heart, that if it was the case, if they had been called to liberty, they were not to turn liberty into an opportunity to the flesh. I suppose that is like us. We tend to swing from one extreme to the other. On the one hand we can be on the legal side of demand, and on the other hand we may assume to be in liberty and think that we can just do exactly as we please, and therefore lose the sense of the true liberty of sonship the Lord has won for us. He says, "do not turn liberty into an opportunity to the flesh". It shows how close, how near the flesh is. The Lord would graciously, I believe, help us in our affections that we might on the one hand prove the true liberty in which Christ has set us free and on the other hand not allow the blessed liberty of sonship to become a license for the flesh. I need that word for myself, too, that we might be preserved in the sense of God's present grace and favour and not go to extremes.

Then he says, "by love serve one another". Oh, we need love amongst the saints. The pattern as always is the Lord Jesus. In chapter 13 of his gospel John gives us a beautiful picture of the Lord serving in love: laying aside His garments, taking the towel, taking water and washing the feet of the disciples. He was serving them in love. Paul says here, "the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (v.14). I appeal to every heart tonight, to be on the line of serving in love; not on a line of demand, not on a line of requirement, but serving one another in love. The Lord Jesus did that. Paul says in another letter, "I shall most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your souls, if even in abundantly loving you I should be less loved." (2 Corinthians 12:15).

Let us build up a stock of love and find that there is a basis by which we can serve one another. "But" Paul says, "if ye bite and devour one another, see that ye are not consumed one of another." Oh, beloved brethren, may I appeal to every heart here about biting and devouring. It is making a point, sticking to it, making capital from it, remembering old scores, bringing up past history. Oh, beloved brethren, in love let us serve one another. May the result be as the Lord Jesus said, "As I have done to you, ye should do also. .. As I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:15, 34). I do not see a basis to serve, at all, if love is not the motive for it. "By love serve one another".

The Holy Spirit

In Ephesians chapter 4 the word is, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which ye have been sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and heat of passion, and wrath, and clamour, and injurious language, be re-

moved from you, with all malice; and be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you." That is a normal outflow from the hearts of persons who have been blessed through the gospel, in forgiveness, favour and freedom. And remember this, Paul is addressing believers in this chapter; he is not speaking to heathens. He is speaking about bitterness as marking a believer. Think about that. He is speaking about bitterness, clamour, heat of passion and wrath. These are things that Paul says are not becoming to believers. They are not becoming to us, beloved brethren. These are elements that spring from the flesh—clamour, heat of passion, wrath, injurious language, malice. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). It cannot be changed. The issue lies in the cross. "God ... has condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). Sin is never forgiven. Sin has been condemned in the flesh, in the cross of Christ. He has been made sin for us. "Him who knew not sin he (God) has made sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our sins have been borne, but He has been made sin, for us, who knew not sin.

There are other things the apostle speaks of here; he says, "do not grieve the Holy Spirit". What an exhortation that is. What a title, "the Holy Spirit of God". What a glorious Person He is. We have been given the Holy Spirit. It is normal that persons who believe in Christ receive the Holy Spirit. That is normal christian experience. I refer you to Acts 2:38 and Ephesians chapter 1. It says, "in whom also, having believed," that is, in Christ, "ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13). The normal outcome of believing the gospel is that persons receive the Holy Spirit. But the apostle says here 'Do not grieve Him.' We have been sealed for the day of redemption. How wonderful. We are God's property, against the day of the redemption of our bodies. What a wonderful thing that God has put His mark upon the saint by the Holy Spirit's sealing. Let us rise to these blessed things. Let us have done with the grovelling and the bitterness and the passion and the wrath and so on. Let us rise to the blessedness of these divine promises and be in this way towards one another, "kind, compassionate". We are all tested by these things; "forgiving one another" involves the outgoing of the heart towards your brother and your sister. "As God also in Christ has forgiven you."

I leave the word with us, that we might through the grace of the Lord Jesus find the gain and the blessedness of these precious things that are open to us. We have been brought into them at such a great cost, in the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. May we do so and find grace in working them out amongst ourselves.

Malcolm Wallach