

No. 16

Living Water — Issue No 16

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Correction

Lines 12 and 13 on page 17 of Issue No. 15 should read:

‘Jay, I love you dearly, but not even you can come to Me except through My Son who I sacrificed for you’. It is regretted this error occurred.

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“*Living Water*” is edited by Mark Lemon & published by the Stone Publishing Trust (Registered Charity 1034689) 130 London Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1BA.

Correspondents within the UK are welcome to use the Freepost address:
Stone Publishing Trust, FREEPOST TN3448, SEVENOAKS, Kent TN13 1BR

Quotations from the Bible given in “*Living Water*” are normally from the Darby translation or from the Authorised (King James) Version.

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“THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH”

(Nehemiah 8:10)

Luke 15: 3 – 7

Matthew 11: 25–26

John 15: 9 – 11

Hebrews 12: 2

The Bible says that, “the joy of the Lord is your strength”. Joy is something that every christian should know experimentally. It says in Romans, “the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing” (Romans 15:13).

It is God’s desire that everyone who comes under the touch of Jesus should be filled with joy and peace in believing.

We often speak of the Lord Jesus as a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3), and the scriptures tell us much about the Lord’s sorrow, but the Lord Jesus was also a Man of joy as having communion with His Father.

God’s ways have frequently occasioned joy. In connection with creation God said to Job, “Where wast thou when I founded the earth? ... When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4,7). I do not know whether the angels understood what God was going to do when He made the earth and laid its foundations, but they celebrated with joy that wonderful event. Then when Jesus came to this earth, what a wonderful announcement was made; “...glad tidings of great joy ... to all the people” and “the multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men.” (Luke 2:10,13,14).

After the resurrection the Lord Jesus came where the disciples were in the upper room, and it says, “The disciples rejoiced therefore, having seen the Lord” (John 20:20). How wonderful to get a touch from the risen Lord. It set their hearts on fire and filled them with joy and peace. “Peace be to you”. At the time of His ascension Jesus “led them out as far as Bethany, ... and was carried up into heaven. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God” (Luke 24:50–52). It is wonderful to be a christian and to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal Saviour.

Now I want to draw your attention briefly to the things in which the Lord Jesus found His joy, for “The joy of the Lord is your strength.”

The Lord’s joy in bringing back the lost sheep (Luke 15)

In Luke chapter 15 we often concentrate on the lost sheep and on the prodigal son, as if everything centred around them but really the theme of this chapter is

the joy of the Father, the joy of the Son (the shepherd) and the joy of the Holy Spirit (typified in the woman). It says that a man had a hundred sheep and lost one of them. I do not know much about sheep, but the prophet says, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). The gospel comes to us individually. The shepherd leaves the ninety and nine and goes after that which is lost until he find it. It was his own possession; he says, "My lost sheep". It was His even when it was lost, a lost sinner, like all of us. It was His lost sheep. It is wonderful to realise that even before we yield to Jesus He has claims over us. We belong to Him as our Creator and our breath is in His hand (Daniel 5:23).

The shepherd goes after the sheep until he finds it. Think of the sufferings of Jesus; what darkness and suffering He endured. Think of what it cost Jesus, as the hymn puts it:–

*'How deep were the waters crossed,
And how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost'.*

The Saviour came to seek us, but think of what it cost to bring you and me back from the dark paths of sin. It meant Calvary for Jesus. If there had never been another lost sheep in this world, Jesus would have had to die on Calvary's cross in order that *I* might be found, and forgiven, and brought back. It says, "He lays it on his own shoulders rejoicing". Think of the joy of Jesus! We do not often think of the joy that the Lord had. What joy to Him to cleanse the leper. What joy to open the eyes of the blind and to make the lame to walk. The Lord was rejoicing! His heart was filled with joy as He touched and liberated men and women. What a wonderful Saviour! What a shepherd!

He "lays it upon His own shoulders rejoicing" and brings it to the house. There is a sphere of joy and blessing in the house. Then He calls the friends and neighbours and says, "Rejoice with me". Not only does the Lord Himself rejoice but He says, 'I want you to rejoice with me'. It is wonderful when you see someone get a touch from the Lord Jesus. We shared in it recently after a young man went home from the preaching and in the quietness of his room asked the Lord Jesus to be his own personal Saviour. He said his heart was filled with joy; he said he could have wept too!

He says, "Rejoice with me" and so we can share the Lord's joy in bringing men and women back from the distance of sin, back to the house, the place of blessing and salvation. "I say unto you, that thus there shall be joy in heaven for one repenting sinner, more than for ninety and nine righteous who have no need of repentance. ... there is joy before the angels of God ..." It does not actually say that the angels rejoice but that there is joy in their presence. I think

of the heavenly host who looked down when our Saviour was born at Bethlehem and of the angel who strengthened our Saviour in the garden of Gethsemane, and of the angels at the tomb on the resurrection morning; think of them seeing this joy also. I think it is the joy of the Father and the joy of the Son and the joy of the Holy Spirit. The angels see the joy of the Godhead in bringing back one lost sheep. Hallelujah!

The Lord's joy in the Father's sovereign work (Matthew 11)

We are often happy when circumstances are favourable but here in Matthew chapter 11 the Lord's circumstances were contrary. He was rejected by the cities, but still He rejoiced! "Jesus answering said, I praise thee, Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes." He rejoiced at the Father's sovereign operations. When He saw people come to Him He saw the Father's hand, sovereignly drawing them to Himself. "No one can come to me except the Father who has sent me draw him" (John 6:44). So when the woman came out of Samaria I think the Lord's heart was gladdened.

The wise and prudent Pharisees did not enter into these things. They had no idea of the marvellous blessing that Jesus was bringing to mankind, of the work that was going on in the souls of men. Think of how the Lord must have rejoiced when Peter came to Him. He looked at Peter and said, "Thou shalt be called Cephas (which interpreted is stone)" (John 1:42). He saw God's work, what Peter was and what he would be in relation to God's new order of things. A little later, when He said to the disciples "Who do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matthew 16:13), it was Peter who said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v16). What does the Lord say? "Flesh and blood has not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in the heavens". He was rejoicing at what was coming out of Peter's soul in relation to the glory of His own Person and He recognised it as the sovereign work of God.

It should come home to us that it is not just an ordinary thing that has happened to us, that has made us christians. It is a miracle of grace! It is God's sovereign work! It is a new birth! That is what Jesus said, "Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God" It is entirely outside of ourselves; it is His own sovereign operation. It is no ordinary thing that our sins should be forgiven, that we should have peace with God and a sure and certain hope of heaven. It is a mighty miracle of God's grace! If God has begun a work in your soul, it will be completed. "He who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day" (Philippians 1:6). The young man who came to the Lord, of whom I was speaking—well, we have lost touch with him but I can tell you this, that a work of God was begun in his soul which will be

completed “unto Jesus Christ’s day”! Jesus will never take His eye off him; he is one of His sheep.

Think of the coming day when God will display the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. All that God has done in the hearts of men and women by His grace He will display to the whole universe. Men think they have got it all their own way just now, but they will wonder when they see what God has wrought. The Lord Jesus will be wondered at and admired in all them that have believed, not only Himself personally, but He will be admired in all them that have believed (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

So we should rejoice as we see God’s work appear in the hearts of others. Paul and Barnabas had been out on their missionary work and after their return they visited different cities and told believers, in Samaria for instance, about God’s work in the conversion of the Gentiles; it says “they caused great joy to all the brethren” (Acts 15:3). It is good news when we hear about God’s work, whether it is in Britain or Russia or China or anywhere! It is something to rejoice in, that God is filling His house. He says, “Go out ... that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). We sometimes pass on bad news but let us spread the good news!

The joy of the Lord in His Father’s love (John 15)

In John 15, the Lord says, “As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you: abide in my love”. Think of the standard of things in this gospel. We read that “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand” (John 3:35). In chapter 10 Jesus says, “On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again”. Think of the Lord Jesus giving His Father an added reason for loving Him, in that He was going to lay down His life. Why was that? It was because God was going to secure all His pleasure through the laying down of Christ’s life and His taking it again.

Then Jesus says, “As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you”. This is divine love reaching out to us. “As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you: abide in my love”. Jesus then says, “I have spoken these things to you that my joy may be in you” “These things” are what is spoken of in the verses we read. “As the Father has loved me, I also have loved you: abide in my love. If ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His love”. Oh what joy of communion the Lord Jesus had. Think of Him out in the desert, up the mountain at night and on the mount of Olives, praying (Luke 6:12, 9:28; Mark 14:26,32). There is, too, something deeper that the Lord enjoyed—just to be in His Father’s presence. What those nights were as the Son was alone, enjoying the sweetness and communion of His Father’s love, abiding in His Father’s love.

He delighted to do His Father's commandments. He said, in relation to the laying down of His life, "I have received this commandment of my Father" (John 10:18). He did His Father's commandments and abode in the Father's love. Now He says, 'You do the same. You keep my commandments, and abide in my love'. What a challenge that is. Life is so busy! There is so much to do and we need to be more definite in setting aside time to be in the Lord's presence, not just to bring our cares and troubles of which we have so many, but to be in the Saviour's presence. The hymn says,:-

*'Tis the treasure we've found in His love
That has made us now pilgrims below.'*

Dear fellow christian, are you finding your treasure in the love of Jesus? Have these secret times, knowing personally something of the love of Jesus.

The Lord follows on by saying: "A new commandment I give to you, that ye love one another". This is the new commandment (John 13:34). It is to us also that the Lord is speaking. Let us love one another. Let nothing come in between us. We may not always see 'eye-to-eye' (but we shall up there!); I am not speaking now about the fundamental principles of the christian faith but there are certain things as to interpretation that we may see differently; the vital thing is, dear brethren, that we have a strong love for one another, a love that is not so fragile that every little difference causes a division. So the Lord is really saying, 'Now, this is the way to be kept in joy—to love one another and so keep My commandment.'

The joy set before the Lord (Hebrews 12)

"Who, in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the shame". It does not say here what that joy was but my simple impression is that it is the Lord's joy at going back to heaven, into His Father's presence, and going back as Man. In John 17, Jesus spoke about going back, as Man, into the glory that He had with the Father long before. What joy was in the Lord's heart as He came into manhood and as Man glorified God, but here He is at the end of His pathway and even as He faced the cross there was a joy that lay before Him and sustained Him in that hour of suffering.

Think of what that opens up for us, dear brethren. Heaven is where Jesus is! Heaven is where our home is! The Lord could say, "Father, I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory". Think of the glory of that blessed Man! The hymn says: -

*'O the sight in heav'n is glorious!
Man in righteousness is there;
Once the Victim, now victorious,
Jesus lives in glory fair!'*

We are going to be with Him; that is the Lord's promise. "That where I am ye also may be" (John 14:3). What a portion we have to look forward to. Is the Man in heaven the One that fills our hearts? May we look steadfastly on Jesus today, and, if the way on earth costs us a little bit in sacrifice and reproach for the Saviour, do not forget the joy that is just ahead. We are going to see our Saviour face to face and be with Him for ever. May we go on our way rejoicing. For His name's sake.

Brian Parr

ENCOURAGEMENT

2 Corinthians	7: 6 & 7
Luke	24: 17, 27, 30 & 31
Genesis	37: 12 - 14
Philippians	2: 19 & 20
1 Thessalonians	4: 15 - 18

On the day that I was asked to come here I was feeling rather low and thinking that it would be a good thing to get some encouragement. The next morning I read these words in Corinthians—"God who encourages those that are brought low" and it seemed that every scripture I looked at subsequently had something to do with encouragement. I have a calendar at home which has a topic for each month. When I got to February you can guess what the topic was—encouragement, written in big letters!

So I want to say something to you about encouragement. Firstly how God encourages, then how the Lord Jesus encourages us, thirdly, about the encouragement of the Holy Spirit and finally how we can encourage one another. I want to draw several examples from scripture of those who were encouraged and those who were an encouragement to others. It is good to draw from the examples of scripture. The records given of the history of one and another in the Bible are not just history; they are recorded for our benefit. Paul wrote: "For as many things as have been written before have been written for our instruction, that through endurance and through encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

Encouragement which comes from God

We read in Corinthians of God's encouragement, "even God encouraged us". "He that encourages those that are brought low". I want to start with that point tonight, that God Himself would encourage. My example for that is Elijah.

You can read his history in the scriptures; Elijah was battling against the false system around him and he became greatly discouraged. Everything was against him and he said, 'I cannot take it any more. I am going away and I want to die'. You cannot get much more discouraged than Elijah.

If you read the scriptural account you will see that he was visited and he was given strength. There is one thing I would like to say tonight and that is that if you are feeling low God will give you strength. God made provision for Elijah to be kept. We need strength for our journey as Christians through this scene and if you are feeling low God will see to it; He will bring in His own provision and give you strength. I believe His strength is His love as we sang in our hymn at the beginning, 'In weakness be Thy love our strength'. The love of God for us is so strong and if you are feeling low I would say to you, 'Do not give up. God is with you; God is for you; God will personally strengthen you for the journey. He will give you what is needed for you to go through the wilderness.' Elijah was strengthened by special provision. As you go through this scene where everything seems to be against you God will come in, in His own way, and strengthen you.

After he was strengthened he was brought to the mount and God questioned him. God may do that. You say, 'God knows everything.' So He does but God likes to draw us out. He says, 'Why are you here? What are you doing, Elijah?' Elijah says, 'Everything is lost; I am the only one. I am alone; all have left me'. An earthquake came and then a wind and a fire, and God was not in any of them. Afterwards there is a "still small voice", and God was there.

Maybe tonight you do not know which way to turn; I would say to you, 'Wait patiently for God. He may not be in the earthquake or the fire but He is there. He is nearer than you think'. God is very near; He may be speaking to you. God sometimes speaks with a still small voice and we need to listen to what He is saying. What was God saying to Elijah? He was telling him that all was not hopeless as he supposed. Elisha was to be anointed prophet in Elijah's place. God's purposes were going through. God was saying, 'Never mind how you feel, Elijah; I have my purposes'. It is a wonderful comfort to me that, no matter how I feel, God has His purposes and He cannot be hindered in any thought of His. If you are feeling all alone in the testimony tonight, I would remind you of God's word to Elijah, "I have left me seven thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal". We often say that we live in a day of small things and that may be so in a certain sense, but there are many of the Lord's people in every place. What an encouragement God's word must have been to Elijah.

The God of Elijah is our God too! God is very near to each of us. He would encourage us tonight to draw near to Him and to enquire of Him. How many

times the Scriptures speak of waiting for the Lord: “I waited patiently for the Lord” (Psalm 40:1), “Stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah” (Exodus 14:13), “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). I would urge you tonight to take stock and be quiet before God, to come into His presence, to seek His face. He will speak to you; He will give you a word of encouragement. He will say; ‘All is not lost’. God knows what He is doing. What a wonderful comfort that is! God knows what He is doing with you and with me.

Encouragement which comes from the Lord Jesus

I read in Luke 24 because there you find two discouraged disciples on the way to Emmaüs. It seems that they supposed that everything to do with Christ had come to an end. The One on whom they had pinned their hopes had been crucified. I do not think we can really understand the despondency of those two disciples at that time. How down they must have felt! They had never before seen anyone quite like the Lord Jesus Christ; they had been in His presence and come to know Him and love Him. They had heard of the women going to the sepulchre and of the vision of angels who said that He was living but Cleopas and his companion do not appear to have believed it. How slow we are to understand! Jesus rose from the dead; He rose by the Father’s power; what a triumph that is! If you are feeling despondent tonight I would point you to a risen and glorified Saviour. That is where our hope is; Jesus is alive.

In Luke 24 these disciples going to Emmaüs were probably talking about what could have been. How much time we spend talking about what might have been! The reality is more blessed; Jesus draws alongside them! I said earlier that God is very near to us; I would say to you also that Jesus is very near. Paul says, “The Lord is near”. I would seek to encourage you tonight by saying that the Lord Jesus is very near you.

When the Lord draws near to these two on their journey He questions them. Jesus knew what they were talking about and He knew why they were down but He says, “What discourses are these which pass between you as ye walk, and are downcast?”. He would draw out their feelings. We need to talk to the Lord Jesus, to make our hearts known to Him. How approachable He is. We need to draw close to Him. The Lord Jesus Christ here walks along with them and in a very skilful way He gently draws them out and brings them to Himself. He opens the scriptures to them and they see, maybe for the first time, what the great plan was, that Jesus’ death and burial was not a haphazard thing at the hands of men but rather that it was the divine plan that Jesus had to go that way.

To those two on the Emmaüs road the crucifixion of Jesus had been a very bitter experience. You and I sometimes go through difficult experiences in

order that we may know the Lord in a more real way. In the end they begged Him to come and abide with them. If you are feeling despondent ask the Lord Jesus to come and abide with you. In Luke 24 He went into their house and He “made Himself known to them in the breaking of bread”. The presence of the Lord Jesus cannot help but affect you.

Is the Lord Jesus abiding with you? Is He near? Has He come to you? Do you know Him as the disciples found Him here, as the risen living and abiding Lord? Jesus delights to encourage His own. He would encourage each one of us tonight.

The encouragement of the Holy Spirit

I did not read about the Holy Spirit but it occurred to me that we have a third Divine Person to help us. The Lord Jesus said, “It is profitable for you that I go away that the Comforter might come”. What a wonderful thing it is that we have a Person of the Godhead dwelling within us, One whom Scripture speaks of as the “Comforter”. What does it say of Him? “He joins His help to our weakness”. How much we need that in this present day. How weak we feel. But, dear brother and sister, we have everything we need to be blessed and encouraged tonight. We have God Himself who encourages those who are brought low; we have the Lord Jesus Christ who would come so near; we have the Spirit who has taken up residence in us and is able to quicken us. It is an interesting word, ‘quicken’. I do not fully understand it but one thing is clear; ‘quicken’ means to make us alive. Christianity is about what is living. The hymn says, ‘The Lord of life is risen’ and the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, has come from a risen and glorified Christ and He is in our hearts as a witness to the fact that Jesus is there in heaven. How do we know that the Lord Jesus is glorified? Because we have the Holy Spirit witnessing in our hearts to the living Christ. What a work the Comforter does for us.

How we may encourage one another

I read in Genesis to show that while God may encourage us we are to be an encouragement to one another. I was interested in reading of Joseph to see that just like David he was sent out by his father to visit his brethren, to see how they were getting on. If you read the accounts you will see that the language was very similar. What Israel said to Joseph and what Jesse said to David were almost identical. Both David and Joseph were young men and neither of them got a good reception. So I would urge you, but especially the younger ones, not to give up; it may be God is using you to encourage other believers. We can do this.

I was struck with the willingness of Joseph. He said, "Here am I ". Dear friend, it could be that there is a bit of encouragement for you to do at the present time. Many believers go through troubles, sorrows, struggles and spiritual conflicts. Many are battle-weary and need encouragement. We need as christians to see how one and another are getting on, to enquire after one another in a spiritual way.

Well, Joseph and David both acted on the leading of their father and both were concerned for the welfare of their brethren; it is a good thing if you have the welfare of your brethren in Christ on your heart. Are you and I really concerned for them? Do I love them? I can remember when I did not. Scripture tells us that it is a proof that you have passed from death to life if you love the brethren. It does not mean just those with whom you meet. It is all those that belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, every single one bought with the same precious blood.

The New Testament equivalent of this is found in Timothy. I read in Philippians, "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus to you shortly, that I also may be refreshed, knowing how ye get on". Paul was always concerned about how his brethren were getting on. Paul was one of the greatest missionaries, one of the greatest planters of churches, yet he would not just set up a church and then leave it; he would go back or write to it. He was concerned that they should be getting on. I would raise the challenge; do we have a heart for the brethren? Do we want to encourage them? Sadly, Paul had to say that apart from Timothy he had no one like-minded who cared with genuine feeling how the saints were getting on. Timothy was a young man who loved the Lord and His people. He cared for them and wanted to encourage them although he was of a nervous disposition naturally and somewhat weak in body.

A fourth example that I want to speak about is Barnabas. He worked closely with Paul; it says in Acts chapter 11, "having arrived and seeing the grace of God, rejoiced, and exhorted all with purpose of heart to abide with the Lord". I would like you for a few moments to think of Barnabas; he was pleased to see the believers in Antioch were getting on. When I referred to the Lord Jesus being near I said that it is good if He abides with you but Barnabas in Acts 11 "exhorted all with purpose of heart to abide with the Lord". I cannot encourage you more than to say "abide with the Lord". Whatever your situation might be, I would say, "abide with the Lord".

Barnabas was used to encourage the brethren. Throughout the history of the church there have been those raised up to encourage. Scripture says that he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. I wish there were more good

men like that; that is what the church needs today, good men, those able to be unstinting in their devotion to the Lord and in their zeal for the gospel and also their desire to see the brethren getting on. Do you and I have this heart, for lost souls and for our brethren? We should have an equal amount of fervour for both. What an example Barnabas is for each of us.

Perhaps you are saying 'I am not a David, or a Joseph, or a Timothy or a Barnabas. What am I to do?' You may feel so weak, so useless. Dear fellow believer, you have the most wonderful thing you can do to help yourself and your brethren. 1 Thessalonians 4, where we read, shows us something that we can all do to encourage one another; we can speak of the coming of our Lord Jesus. That is one of the greatest encouragements that I know of. For a christian to have the coming of the Lord before him does quite a few things; it stimulates him to be more holy; "he that has this hope in him purifies himself". If we really believed the Lord Jesus was coming soon, how different we would be! It gives us a greater fervour for men, that they might be saved. "Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men". It gives us great hope and joy that all the trials will be over and the church will be complete, in the twinkling of an eye.

It is instructive that Paul writes this to the Thessalonians because they were one of the companies that really got on well but they had got into a muddle about the coming of the Lord. So Paul writes this epistle to put their minds at rest and outlines the doctrine and the reality of the coming of the Lord Jesus, clearly and unmistakably. That day is not far off. We are to use that hope to encourage one another. "So encourage one another with these words". It would be a good thing if we spoke more about the coming of the Lord Jesus. It was the hope that marked a great revival in the last century. It is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is passing; the true light already shines; the Lord Jesus is coming soon. All our difficulties will be resolved and it will be a great day. To have the hope of it in our hearts is a real encouragement for those that know Him and love Him. If you are abiding in Him then you will be waiting for Him to come. The Lord Jesus is coming soon; what a great rallying point that is. That hope is not the special privilege of a few; it is the portion of all those that belong to Christ and love Him. Each one of us can encourage one another in this way.

We have a God who is able to encourage; the Lord Jesus Christ is near; the Holy Spirit is here. May we know more of this line of encouragement for His Name's sake.

Philip White

O GOD OF MATCHLESS GRACE

O God of matchless grace,
We sing unto Thy name;
We stand accepted in the place
That none but Christ could claim;
Our willing hearts have heard Thy voice,
And in Thy mercy we rejoice.

'Tis meet that Thy delight
Should centre in the Son,
That Thou shouldst place us in Thy sight
In Him, Thy Holy One;
Thy perfect love has cast out fear;
Thy favour shines upon us here.

Eternal is our rest,
O Christ of God, in Thee.
Now of Thy peace, Thy joy, possessed,
We wait Thy face to see;
Now to the Father's heart received,
We know in whom we have believed.

Miss H. K. Burlingham

SONSHIP

Blest Father of glory, we worship,
Thy greatness surpasses our praise;
We bless Thee, Thy Spirit within us
Gives power to these heavenly lays.

We think of the Man in Thy presence,
Set down there, exalted as Head;
Once raised by the might of Thy power,
When numbered along with the dead.

We think of the glory that chose us,
'Twas Thine, blessed Father, the Source;
The glory of love that redeemed us,
Through Jesus, the Man of Thy choice.

As marked out beforehand for sonship,
We praise now the glory of grace
And bow in Thy presence and worship,
As conscious, in Christ, of our place.

B. M. Deck.

EXTRACTS FROM PAST TEACHING

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Untold sorrows characterise the human race, and this invitation is not confined to those who are laden with sin. Jesus addresses any one who is bowed with any possible sorrow, any possible bereavement. Whatever the burden upon you, the Lord speaks to you.

The perfection of the christian life is absolute trust in God. All roads lead to this, and the one who reaches it in any measure will never be confounded.

The fear of God can lift the feeblest and humblest above the fear of man.

Sympathy is the rarest of all ministries, as it is also the sweetest; it makes no show in the world but it leaves its mark.

In praying for the sick I once heard a believer use this expression: ‘May those who are too weak to pray be able to lean.’

“Who hath despised the day of small things?” We are slow to learn that the importance of any service depends upon God’s estimate of it... that the meanest service... is worthy of all our devotedness and zeal if the mind and heart of God are upon it, and if He has put it into our hand.

We cannot have power with men if we have not power with God. The greatest mistake that any of us can make is to seek to have power before men without having been in the presence of God.

We are as dependent upon God when we speak to one soul as when we preach to a thousand. I have learnt this by experience; I have gone to see a sick person in great self-confidence and found I had nothing to say. And then the Lord taught me that I must wait upon Him for the message for a single soul as much as when I was going to preach. May we ever remember this that there may be no trace of self-confidence remaining in the heart.

The wonder is that the Lord condescends to use anything which He gives one to say, seeing that we so often adulterate it with our own thoughts.

It is so gracious of Him to give us any encouragement in our service, but I am convinced that the fruit of our labours which we have not seen will be far more abundant than that which we have been permitted to know of, and hence it is that we have to scatter the seed in faith.

Bear in mind that we must not expect the consciousness of power. It is on this point that so many stumble. They want to feel power, and failing to do so they conclude that they are in the wrong condition of soul for its exercise. No

mistake could be greater. On the other hand the Lord has to break down His servants... in order to reduce them to the sense of their own utter impotence, that they may learn the lesson that His strength is made perfect in weakness.

Unconscious testimony is always the most powerful. I often think that at the judgment seat of Christ we shall find a word we have spoken casually, a little sentence dropped, has been more used than all our preaching and lectures.

Nothing can justify a lack of tenderness in the presentation of the truth.

If you feel 'I can do this or that service', you are not the vessel God can use.

The Lord always sought to deepen exercises of soul, as He did in the case of the Syrophenician woman, refusing to grant her request till she was in the state to receive it. We seek to shorten them, as, for example, when we press souls to an immediate decision for Christ, without considering whether they have been brought to that point by the work of the Holy Ghost.

When there are few gathered together at a meeting, remember that there may be really as much blessing as with larger numbers. God will bring together those whom He purposes to bless, and if we remember this it will keep our eyes up to Him, and that is the one condition of blessing.

A preacher has never to be anxious about results; that is God's concern. He has only to be anxious about three things:

- the state of his own soul;
- being in communion with the mind of God as to those to whom he is speaking; and,
- fidelity in delivering the message.

Intellectual conviction is always powerless, it occupies itself with the truth, and never leads to Christ Himself.

There are seasons when many believers feel as if they could not get into the presence, or obtain the ear of God... Surely it would prove an antidote to Satan's temptations at such periods to remember, that if we cannot pray ourselves, Christ never fails to bear us up in His prevailing intercession... It would soon dispel our gloom and coldness of heart, because it would lead us to look away from ourselves and to expect all from Him, and from His continual ministry for us in the presence of God.

Christ Himself is to be our great example of faith, of a life of dependence upon God. If the holiest man that ever lived were to fill our vision it would only hinder and not help us.

The whole life of our blessed Lord as Man is compressed into the words, “He humbled himself”.

Christ is everything. He is everything to the heart of God, and He desires to be everything to the hearts of His people. That it may be so with you is the highest blessedness I can desire for you.

Edward Dennett

A LETTER FROM A CHRISTIAN WORKER IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

February 1996

...I was encouraged by your letter this morning and I will try to give you some news of us. Things are not any easier here but through this the Lord is strengthening our faith, and daily we are growing in confidence in Him. The Central African Republic, since the devaluation of the currency, has not received any help from the World Bank or from the International Monetary Fund. Inflation is increasing regularly and the salaries of many workers are unpaid for many months. Last year we lost two brothers and one sister from our company because of the lack of medicines or their being unable to pay the hospital for their treatments. We do not cease to pray to God because only He can do something for us.

Living is so difficult and as I cannot meet the need of the people around me I allow some brethren to come and stay with us in our family, to share the little provision the Lord gives us. We can have only one meal a day, the rest of the time we are fasting. The Lord gives us the strength to keep on hoping that He is coming soon and our tears will be changed to joy. We are not only to consider the difficulties we are facing in living but also to serve the Lord, to share our faith in this desperate situation. Only Jesus gives the solution and hope.

I have at least five orphans living with me, added to my own children and others so we experience the grace of God providing for these orphans. We are still praying for the simple furniture (beds etc.) This year two of the children did not attend school because we do not have the money to pay for their scholarship. Maybe next year the Lord will open a door.

Yet the Lord opens a wide door for the gospel. I have been travelling to the pygmies and have been trying to establish an indigenous missionary movement to carry on the task of bringing the gospel to the unreached tribes.

We have also the challenge of Islam. A decade ago in this country Muslims numbered about 3% of the population, today there are about 10%. Because of

the crisis many withdraw from the churches, enter the mosques and are converted to Islam. We have about 2000 students from the Central African Republic in Saudi Arabia studying Islam with the aim of returning with a lot of projects sponsored by Moslem countries to take the country for Islam. I feel that the church here has to face this real challenge. I have set a training programme which will start by the end of this month to help believers in evangelism of Muslims.

Beside the Moslem challenge there are the pygmies and other tribes. I am working to raise a team of people willing to sacrifice their lives for the good news of Jesus to start some missionary work in the coming month. Much of the preparation work is being done in my home.

I share all this with you because you asked. A long time I learned to keep my mouth shut and to pray only, as sometimes information has been taken as an appeal for money. Yet I open my heart to you, and what we most need is the support of your prayers...

May the Lord bless you richly, please share my greetings with all.

Your brother in Christ,

Anatole Banga

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Revelation 1:5
Luke 18:15-18
Romans 5:20-21
Romans 10:6-13
Romans 14:17-18
1 Peter 2:9-10

I want to speak of the kingdom of God. That kingdom was prophesied when the first Gentile monarchy was established. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and in it he saw a great image. He did not understand the dream (see Daniel chapter 2) nor did any of the wise men of Babylon but the secret was made known to Daniel who came into the king's presence and related the dream and its interpretation to Nebuchadnezzar after it had been revealed to him by God. He said, "in the days of these kings shall the God of the heavens set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the sovereignty thereof shall not be left to another people: it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, but itself shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver,

and the gold, —the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter. And the dream is certain, and the interpretation of it sure” (Daniel 2:44,45). The King of that kingdom came in centuries later, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

When Jesus commenced His public service He began to preach in Galilee and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh” (Matthew 4:17). How had it come nigh? With a great fanfare of trumpets to proclaim the king? No! It was the Person of Jesus Himself who brought the blessing of heaven down to earth. God’s favour was to be made known to men. What a wonderful beginning! The sway of heaven was to be known amongst men. That kingdom has continued ever since. It still continues and persons are coming into the blessing of it.

The scripture read in Revelation shows us how the kingdom is formed, that in Luke how we enter into it. In Romans, chapter 5 gives us the principle that reigns in it, chapter 10 the protection it affords, chapter 14 its character. Finally in Peter we see how the kingdom is displayed.

I desire that God in His goodness, by His Spirit, may thus enlighten and awaken us as to the great things that are taking place in the world. The gospel is being proclaimed to bring persons into the blessing of the kingdom, to bring them under the sway of Christ. So here as the beloved apostle speaks of Christ, the faithful Witness, the First-born from the dead, he breaks out in a doxology. That is a long word but it simply means an outburst of praise that sprang from his heart as he thought of Jesus. I wonder whether your lips have ever been used in praise to the Lord Jesus? Do you know Him as Saviour?

He wants to bless you and to bring you under His sway. “To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom”. That is how the kingdom is formed of persons who have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus and whose sins have been forgiven.

Now John does not say, He loved us, and washed us from your sins, he says that He *loves* us and *has washed* us. Every one of us needs the cleansing power of the precious blood of Jesus. He did not need to shed His blood for Himself, blessed be His name, for He was perfect, unique and holy, the blessed Son of God. He did not come to redeem Himself, He came to redeem us. For the gospel to reach fallen man, Jesus must die, that His precious blood might be shed, and a sacrifice made that would meet the righteous claims of God’s holy throne, so that He might come out in righteousness towards all men and bless the sinner who repents.

The life of a christian should therefore be subjected to the authority of the Lord. That is why we read in Luke 18. The formation of the kingdom is done

by Christ. *He* has made *us* a kingdom but the question then arises, How do I get in? In this chapter in Luke they brought little children to the Lord that He might bless them, that He might touch them. The disciples when they saw it rebuked them. How self-important they were! It is often like us. We may be disciples of Jesus, but we do not understand His heart, we might be repelling, instead of attracting. The Lord sees it all. Jesus calling them to Him says, “Suffer little children to come to me, ... for of such is the kingdom of God”. You say, How am I going to get in? You have to rid yourself of all your self-importance. It will not do in the kingdom of God. “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.” How does a little child receive things? In simple trust!!

It is very interesting therefore to look at Saul’s conversion. He saw a great light from heaven that brought him down to the ground. As he rose up he was blind. It says that they led him by the hand and brought him into the city. He became like a little child. He was a delineation of those about to believe (1 Timothy 1:16). He set forth what conversion is. He saw the glory of the Lord in all its brilliance and he immediately bowed the knee—he fell to the ground. “Who art thou, Lord?” he said. He did not say, Who art thou, Jesus? He says, Who art thou, *Lord*. He came under His authority immediately.

What a transformation! No wonder he can say to the Colossians, “...who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Colossians 1:13). It was instantaneous with Paul. One moment he was pursuing a course under satanic power and influence, guided by religious orthodoxy, and zeal, totally opposed to the thoughts of God, supporting a religion that had dishonoured God and brought discredit on His Name. He said, ‘I thought I ought to do everything I could against the name of Jesus’. He herded His followers to prison, and when they were put to death he gave his vote.

“I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest”. That is what brought him down and he says, “Who art thou, Lord”. And—I love that touch—“they led him by the hand”. There he was, taken into the very midst of them, and was three days without seeing. When his eyes were opened he saw a brother, and he was brought into the blessing of the kingdom immediately. So the Lord Jesus says in this passage, ‘If you are to enter the kingdom you have to come just like a little child. You cannot bring a thing’. It is all supply. The kingdom of God is here, in the power and energy of the Spirit.

We come as little children, completely dependent upon all that has been supplied from the blessed God Himself. Is that not a wonderful thing to come into? A kingdom of boundless supply and endless resources. That is the kingdom that we present tonight, and what Saul of Tarsus found. As he came into the

house in Damascus he found everything was provided. A dear brother was sent along by the Lord to embrace him. He says, Brother Saul! Instead of the cold repelling atmosphere which he had found in Judaism, he found the warmth of God's house surrounding him.

We come now to Romans chapter 5. This kingdom that God has set up has principles. It is sometimes said righteousness is the first principle of the kingdom. I would suggest that grace is the first principle of the kingdom! "Even as sin has reigned in the power of death, so also grace might reign through righteousness ..." Righteousness is the basis of the kingdom, but grace is the ruling principle in it.

Grace is unmerited favour. It is a supply that does not run out. You need to find it in the christian company. "Ye are saved by grace" (Ephesians 2:5). You need to find it working. Mr. Darby has a very interesting article; 'Grace, the power of unity and of gathering' Grace has a wonderful subduing influence. It does not make any demands; it always brings in supply. It tests us all as to how much grace we have. It is the oil that overcomes the difficulty. You say, 'It must be wonderful if it works', and often alas we are found wanting. That is not because there is any lack from the divine side. "Grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life" shows that there is a boundless supply. The lack is always on our side. We do not avail ourselves of the resources that are available.

Now as to Romans 10. I speak of this in relation to the protection that the kingdom affords. You will notice that it says, "the word of faith, which we preach: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved." That may be initial confession, but it goes further than that.

The apostle uses a quotation from Deuteronomy 30:14; it says, "the word is very near to thee, in thy mouth" as if God, in taking account of His people, was bringing the word as near as possible to them, and all they had to do was to say the words. "In thy mouth and in thy heart" as if He would put it there. We will never get the blessing unless we confess Jesus as Lord, and believe in our hearts that God has raised Him from among the dead. We do not only take account of Him at Calvary; we see Him in glory, as raised from among the dead.

Then there is something further. We learn to confess Jesus as Lord in the scene where He is absent, and that requires moral courage. But we will find that it will protect us from the dangers and the snares around us, of which there are many. As we confess the Lord and hoist the flag for Him we enjoy His protection.

We are here in the midst of the devil's power and Satan's forces are ranged

against us. There are lusts within to which he would also appeal. Some of us can look back to the time when we were young, and temptations came which we failed to overcome. We gained the victory when the Spirit of God enabled us to confess Jesus as Lord.

Hoist the flag for the Lord. You find power that comes with it. Confess Him in your work-place. Confess Him at school. Take shelter under the Lord's name. You do not need a uniform to be in the salvation army. You need to be amongst them today, and hoist the flag. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, ... thou shalt be saved." You can be saved from the power of Satan, and all the forces that he brings against you.

Stephen's martyrdom would illustrate it for us. He was the first martyr, the first martyr of the kingdom. Did he yield? Did he flinch? Not a bit. He brought home to the people their sin. "Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit" He said that to awaken their consciences but it aroused their hatred. They fell upon him with one accord, cast him out and hurled stones upon him. But, looking up to heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. His last words are "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" ... "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:59-60).

Stephen died, but the kingdom triumphed. He did not yield to the enemy's power. Who knows, dear brethren, what we may have to face in an apostate day. What pressures are building up, anti-christian pressures. We will not be able to stand on a mere theological understanding of the truth. We need to stand with our feet firmly on solid ground in our defence of the Lord and His name, in the place where He has been rejected.

I speak of Romans 14 because there we have the character of the kingdom. "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit". It is sustained here in the power and energy of the Spirit, but has to be put to use. Romans 14 is a chapter that is taken up with care for a weak brother. Let us be careful then that we do not hinder a soul in their progress in the truth. Much damage has been done by neglect of this admonition.

The apostle says here, "destroy not your brother". It was sometimes said that we cannot damage the work of God. But we can. It is a tender plant and we need to take care of it, that wherever the work of God appears that we do nothing to hinder it. So it says, if a person is offended by eating or drinking you would not do it, for the sake of your brother. We are to care for one another. What a wonderful kingdom to be in. It is not 'the weakest goes to the wall' as it is so often the case in the kingdoms of men where need arises and there is nobody to meet it. Not so in the kingdom of God. The smallest, weakest and the frailest person is of value.

And so he says the kingdom “is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace, and joy”. Always keep these things together, like 2 Timothy 2:22, where there are four things together. “Righteousness, faith, love, peace”. That is a four-lane highway. If you just pursue righteousness on its own you will become legal. You must have the four. And so here, “righteousness, peace and joy”. We must have those three things to enjoy what the kingdom of God is actively among the saints. It is righteous to love your brother. Then there is peace, peace even in the scene of what is adverse. Peace is to be enjoyed in the christian company even though we may find many exercises and tests. Joy is found there also.

Well, we come now to the purpose of the kingdom. And this is found in Peter. It says, “ye are a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession, that ye might set forth the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness to his wonderful light”. To *set them forth*. In the kingdom in the coming day, there will be no tests, there will nothing to overcome, the reign of Christ will be absolute.

Peter says that we have not followed cunningly devised fables (2 Peter 1:16). He saw the kingdom in its display in glory. And that was like bedrock in his soul, so that when he became an old man and was passing off the scene, he did not say, ‘Now you dear disciples, I want you to read all my books’; but, ‘I will tell you about that scene I saw, on the mountain, that eclipsed everything else. I saw the Lord Jesus Christ receive glory and honour’.

What a sight that was for him! It shone the brighter as he dwelt on it. He did not record his failure because that had faded out of the way. He said, “Such a voice”. What did it say? “This is my beloved Son”. I trust that you tonight have been attracted into this kingdom of which Christ is head and centre. He is the Lord of all. But we are here now to set forth these excellencies, the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness, to set them forth in our walk and ways, in our testimony.

That is really what is meant by testimony. It is a foreshadowing of what God is going to introduce when Christ appears. The principles of the kingdom are already working. There are those in this world who are setting forth His excellencies, His righteousness, His grace and His loving-kindness. All find their perfection in Christ, but by the Spirit they are to find their expression in us. As we walk in this dark world, what sunshine we will bring.

What a different atmosphere we will bring, into the workplace, and into the home, into the family circle and into the sphere in which we move in this world. We have been called out of a system of darkness and I trust that each one of us has come into wonderful light. So let us set forth these things and be in the gain of the kingdom. What a little time is left to set it forth; the day is

coming when Christ will have full sway and it will all be displayed in wondrous glory.

How soon it is to burst upon our view. And how needful for this poor ravished world. The whole environment is corrupt morally. God will sweep it all with the besom of destruction in view of cleansing the earth from unrighteousness. Then there will not be any rushing about. No motorways, no highways, except the highway of righteousness. It will be in the way of peace. It will all lead to the mountain of Jehovah's house. It says, "all the nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah 2:2). They will not get there by jet. They will flow up to Jerusalem, because that will be the place where the King has His throne. "Let us worship at his footstool" (Psalm 99:5).

Well, dear friends and brethren, some of us will do that tomorrow, on the Lord's day, while He is absent. We will come together under the authority of the Lord. I have to receive this instruction individually for myself. The kingdom is individual; the assembly is collective. The house is collective too. We do not have time now to go into that. I set these things before you, not having exhausted them by any means but just like a little aperitif, for you to do a little study yourself, find out how far this wonderful matter goes. You will find how extensive is the teaching of the kingdom. Paul speaks of it (when all seemed to be breaking down) that the Lord was going to preserve him for His heavenly kingdom (2 Timothy 4:18). "To whom be glory for the ages of ages. Amen"

May the Lord bless the word.

David Bond

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT FAMILY LIFE

The Scripture Gift Mission (SGM) have done us all a service in producing a simple booklet called "Living together God's way" which sets out a series of Biblical texts which bear on family life. We live in a day when many marriages end in divorce and a recent article in a national newspaper claimed that only an unsuccessful man would remain married to the same woman all his life. These trends in society seem to have caused some christians to become confused. Against such a background, to have a clear statement of these things from the Bible is most helpful.

Sometimes the Bible's teaching about marriage has a great effect on those who are not christians. Lee Strobel, once a tough Chicago journalist, but now a committed christian, records that before he came to Christ he had started to try to apply the biblical principles about marriage to his own marriage and found that they worked. It was part of the process that led him to the Lord.

The extract from "Living together God's way" which follows is used with permission from SGM, the only change being that quotations are from the Darby translation of the Bible. Copies—using a combination of NIV/GNB—are available from SGM free of charge for personal distribution. The address is:— Scripture Gift Mission, Radstock House, 3 Eccleston Street, London SW1W 9LZ.

LIVING TOGETHER GOD'S WAY

Family life is under pressure. Commitment to life-long marriage is still the only stable basis for our relationships. The Bible shows how this is possible.

MARRIAGE IS GOD'S GIFT TO US

And Jehovah Elohim said, It is not good that Man should be alone; I will make him a help-mate, his like. (Genesis 2:18)

And God created Man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them; and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it;... (Genesis 1:27 & 28)

Jesus Christ also said: but from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh: so that they are no longer two but one flesh. (Mark 10:6-8)

BUILDING THE FAMILY

Strong marriages are built on the love Jesus shows

Jesus said: This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. (John 15:12)

So ought men also to love their own wives as their own bodies: he that loves his own wife loves himself. For no one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Christ the assembly ... But ye also, every one of you, let each so love his own wife as himself; but as to the wife I speak that she may fear the husband. (Ephesians 5:28-29,33)

EACH PARTNER HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE THE MARRIAGE STRONG:

Respect – not rights

...regarding not each his own qualities, but each those of others also.

(Philippians 2:4)

Let the husband render her due to the wife, and in like manner the wife to the husband. The wife has not authority over her own body, but the husband: in like manner also the husband has not authority over his own body, but the wife.

(1 Corinthians 7:3 & 4)

Ye husbands likewise, dwell with them according to knowledge, as with a weaker, even the female, vessel, giving them honour, as also fellow heirs of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.

(1 Peter 3:7)

Forgiveness – not resentment

Be angry, and do not sin; let not the sun set upon your wrath ... Let all bitterness, and heat of passion, and wrath, and clamour, and injurious language, be removed from you, with all malice; and be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you.

(Ephesians 4:26, 31 & 32)

...forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any should have a complaint against any; even as the Christ has forgiven you,... (Colossians 3:13)

Love – not anger

Love has long patience, is kind; love is not emulous of others; love is not insolent and rash, is not puffed up, does not behave in an unseemly manner, does not seek what is its own, is not quickly provoked, does not impute evil, does not rejoice at iniquity but rejoices with the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

(1 Corinthians 13:4–8)

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your own wives, and be not bitter against them.

(Colossians 3:18 & 19)

MARRIAGE IS A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

It is built on complete faithfulness to each other

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctifica-

tion and honour.

(1 Thessalonians 4:3 & 4)

...but on account of fornications, let each have his own wife, and each woman have her own husband. (1 Corinthians 7:2)

Let marriage be held every way in honour, and the bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers will God judge. (Hebrews 13:4)

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then, taking the members of the Christ, make them members of a harlot? Far be the thought. Do you not know that he that is joined to the harlot is one body? for the two, he says, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin which a man may practise is without the body, but he that commits fornication sins against his own body. Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own? for ye have been bought with a price: glorify now then God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:15–20)

MARRIAGE IS FOR LIFE

In God's sight: For the married woman is bound by law to her husband so long as he is alive; but if the husband should die, she is clear from the law of the husband: so then, the husband being alive, she shall be called an adulteress if she be to another man; but if the husband should die, she is free from the law, so as not to be an adulteress, though she be to another man. (Romans 7:2 & 3)

Divorce has never been part of God's best for us

And the Pharisees came to him tempting him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? But he answering said to them, Have ye not read that he who made them, from the beginning made them male and female, and said, On account of this a man shall leave father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh? so they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. They say to him, Why then did Moses command to give a letter of divorce and to send her away? He says to them, Moses, in view of your hard-heartedness, allowed you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not thus. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, not for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery; and he who marries one put away commits adultery. (Matthew 19:3–9)

...Let not wife be separated from husband; (but if also she shall have been separated, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband;) and let not husband leave wife. (1 Corinthians 7: 10 & 11)

Take heed then to your spirit, and let none deal unfaithfully against the wife of his youth, (for I hate putting away, saith Jehovah the God of Israel;) (Malachi 2:15 & 16)

God willing in the next issue, "Healing the Wounds", "Parents and Children" and "The family and Prayer".