

# *Living Water* — Issue No 19

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## · FOUR COMMITTED PERSONS - MOSES

“By faith he... persevered as seeing him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27)

The story of Moses is well known. What I have particularly in mind is that he persevered as seeing Him who is invisible. The section in Hebrews starts: “By faith Moses, being born, was hid three months by his parents”. That does not refer to Moses’ faith but to the faith of his parents. God looked on their faith, and He honoured their faith. I think God looks down upon parents today, especially young parents; He sees them with their families, seeking to keep their children from the world, and God honours that. God takes account of it.

How fine it is to see parents seeking to hold their household on christian ground. That does not take away the responsibility of the child when it grows up but it shows the faith of the parents, holding the children as potential for God, preserved from the world.

Where we read, Moses has grown. “By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he persevered”. I love that word, “he persevered”. If there is anything that is needed today, it is perseverance. If you look around and see all the ruin in the church publicly it could cause despair and a giving up.

How was he able to persevere? As seeing Him who is invisible. It was a lovely moment when Moses’ sight was directed towards the burning bush, to see the great sight, this bush that was burning and not consumed. Let us have in our affections the great things that God is doing and know that what He has begun He is going to finish. It is not going to be consumed. We may look around and feel despair, feel hopelessness, but God is saying, ‘what I put my Name to I am not giving up’. In the light of that, let us be like Moses and persevere.

In Exodus 3 Moses was confronted by God, the One who proclaimed Himself as “I AM THAT I AM” and there came into Moses’ heart a deep conviction. If such a One spoke to him in all His greatness, the “I AM THAT I AM”, then surely He was able not only to see His people out of Egypt but through the wilderness, and into the goodly land as well. That is the kind of God we have to do with.

Moses carried that conviction in his heart all the way through the wilderness pathway. God then says, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob". In our Bible readings in Aberdeen we have been looking at these patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When you come to Jacob you wonder how God could want to be called the God of Jacob. What a consolation it is to our hearts that He is the God of Jacob and He is our God as well. Just as He saw His people through the wilderness, so He will see us through.

My burden is that we should get into His presence and ensure that we carry from His presence a conviction of heart. It is easy in christianity to be just an onlooker, just a spectator, but there is so much more blessing to be found as you become involved in the great things of God, seeking God's help, seeking conviction from God that will cause your life to have new direction, a new incentive, a new objective, and I believe that this is what came into Moses' heart.

So he had high spots; he had all the joy of coming out of Egypt and the triumph of going through the Red Sea. Moses was with the peōple in these triumphs. He was also with them at their low points; he was with them as they grumbled, as they moaned. He was with them all the time. It never altered the conviction that was in his heart.

Let me ask you personally—do you have a conviction of heart as regards God? A conviction of heart that puts you in His testimony, not just as drifting along but as having a real committal to God's things here? There came a point with Moses when he rejected one line and said that from now on the all absorbing object of his life was going to be God and His people. What a committal that was!

You young ones, there is blessing to be had as you set aside the influence of material things and commit yourself wholeheartedly to God. He will give you a conviction of heart. That is what Moses did; he persevered as seeing Him who is invisible.

I would like this to be a word of encouragement. As that kind of heart conviction is known, so also will be the encouragement that goes along with it. Despite the ruin of the present day God is going to see His testimony through and as we are exercised by faith, looking towards the One who is invisible, we will draw the necessary strength in order to walk here steadily, pleasing to the Lord.

*Alex Mowat*

## YOUR LAST OPPORTUNITY

Jeremiah 8: 20

Luke 12: 16 - 20

Matthew 25: 6 - 10

A few years ago one Sunday evening in Florida, a lorry driver went into a petrol station at night. He had a long journey ahead of him. The man was unsaved, but his wife had been praying for him for many years. As he was filling up his tank he heard some singing coming from a little mission hall nearby. He parked his lorry and went into the service. That night he came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

The headlines the following day in the paper were: 'Lorry plunges 1000 feet down deep valley. Driver killed instantly'. For that man the gospel preaching in that mission hall was his last opportunity to come to the Saviour. There will come a time in your life when it will be your last opportunity to be saved. Because our life is in God's hands I do not know if I will have another opportunity to preach the gospel and if you will ever have another opportunity to believe.

Who knows what the day will bring forth? Who knows when the harvest will be passed, the great gathering in of souls? Who knows when the summer will end? For the man we read about in Luke 12, the summer ended. The time of opportunity ended, for God said "this night thy soul shall be required of thee".

But tonight is a favourable time. Why? Because God waits in grace with hands outstretched to bless. It says in Isaiah that "Jehovah setteth himself to plead". Think of God's attitude towards you tonight; it is one of blessing. We sometimes sing:

*'Jesus lingers still, 'tis for you he waits'.*

How long has He waited?

How many opportunities to come to Him have you had in your life? In Revelation we read about Jezebel, "I gave her time to repent and she will not". Is that how it stands with you tonight, that you have been given opportunity to repent and you will not?

There are two events that may happen at any time in our lives; one is that death may claim us, as it did the man in Luke 12, and the other is that the Lord Jesus may come for His own. If you are unsaved you are not ready for either event. Is that how you are tonight, unprepared to meet God?

You need to be saved. Why? Because you are a sinner. Whatever your estimation of yourself, in God's sight you are a sinner. When the Lord Jesus was here He could say to some, "Ye are they who justify themselves before men", but God knows your heart. You may be blameless in the sight of others; you may lead a perfect life in your own eyes but remember that God sees your heart. What does Jesus say about the heart? -that the heart is corrupt and out of it spring forth all kinds of evils. God wants to give you a new heart. Jesus would say to you tonight, 'Let me change your life'.

I love that hymn which says, 'what a wonderful change in my life has been wrought since Jesus came into my heart!' Most here tonight can say 'Amen' to that. When Jesus touches our life He changes it. That hymn says, 'Floods of joy o'er my soul like the sea billows roll, since Jesus came into my heart.' Not that the believer in Jesus does not have sorrows; many of you in this room tonight have experienced sorrow in your life. But there is one thing; there are joys in Christ that go right on to eternity. There is "a time to weep and a time to laugh". But how wonderful it is that there are floods of joy that go right onto a eternal day. How Jesus can change and touch your life tonight!

Recently I was sitting in Glasgow outside a store and a man was standing alone preaching in the open air. Another man came and joined him. He saw me listening and he came and sat down and he said, 'you can be saved now'. I said, 'I belong to Jesus'. The man replied, 'Jesus means everything to me'. What a testimony! He said, '10 years ago I was homeless and one night I was asked into a service and I was saved. Jesus touched my life'. He said, 'I come down here every Saturday morning to sing and to say a few words for my Saviour'. What a change!

There was a man that we read about in Mark's gospel chapter 5 who lived in the tombs. What happened to that man when Jesus came into his life? He went out into Decapolis and began to "proclaim how great things Jesus had done for him". Can we say tonight that Jesus has done great things for us? I have a friend who has three times been in prison but since he came to know the Lord Jesus as Saviour,

nothing delights him more than standing and proclaiming how great things Jesus has done for him.

I can look back on my own life to a time of rebellion. I can remember growing up in a christian home, and one thing I wanted to do was to stop coming to the christian meetings and to go out and enjoy myself. Then the Lord Jesus put His hand upon me, and I can tell you tonight how great things He has done for me. How thankful I am for those who prayed for me, my parents and those of the christian company I was with. I would encourage each one of us each night, as believers, to pray for our children. Pray for them that they may be preserved from the world and the devil. Think of how the world has outstretched hands stained with the blood of Jesus. Pray for the children amongst us, that they will be preserved and brought to Jesus in their early years. Time spent in prayer is well spent! Let us pray for those that are unsaved.

What a Saviour Jesus is! Think of His incomming. He was born a king. I know if the Queen came to Portknockie the crowds would be out wanting to see her. Yet when Jesus was born they said there was no room for Him. Think of His mission; it was to go to the cross to die for your sins and to die for mine. Why? Because Jesus loves the sinner. Jesus died for us. He did not die for us as good persons; Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. That is what we are. But I am telling you that in the precious blood of Jesus you can be washed whiter than snow. David says in the psalm, "wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow". I love to tell you that Jesus is alive. He is a living Saviour. We do not present a Saviour who is dead; we proclaim a Saviour who left an empty tomb, who rose, who rose triumphant. I asked the children at our Friday night children's meetings, "why was the stone rolled away from the tomb of Jesus?" I hoped that they would not say, 'To let Jesus out'. One little boy said, 'it was to show us an empty tomb'. An empty tomb is there to show us that Jesus is alive in glory tonight.

This man we read of in Luke 12 thought only of the present. How many there are tonight who think like that. Think of eternity. We are growing up in a land that has given up the things of God, given up the scriptures; people do not want to think of eternity. If you speak to them about heaven or hell, they do not want to hear. They say, 'let us eat, drink and be merry'. They do not want to think of these things. Yet, my friend, you must think of these things. Why? Because tonight God may say to you, "this night thy soul shall be required of thee". How solemn it is! How short life is! Job tells us that our "days are determined". No one can

say, 'I'll live to 90 or some other age'. Our times are in God's hands. If you were to cross the boundary line tonight from time into eternity, how would it stand with you? A famous man was recently recorded as saying 'if only we could live forever'. Well, we are going to live for ever, either in heaven or in hell. In heights of glory where the redeemed will be, or in anguish in the lake of fire. There is no neutral ground; it is either heaven or hell, and you are bound for one or the other.

Just this week a multi-millionaire was dying; his family were round about him, and they got a piece of paper and wrote saying 'we love you'. He answered them back that he loved them. Yet on another piece of paper he drew a circle and put a dot in the middle and wrote next to it, 'when you die, you die alone'. But a believer does not die alone, because Jesus is with him. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me". Friend, if you were to reach the end of life's journey tonight, how would it be with you? Are you prepared for the journey into eternity? You are either prepared tonight, or you are unprepared.

A man lay dying in an Elgin hospital recently. He was well known to most of us in the north-east for he was often in our local paper telling about his visits to Africa. He had done many trips, walking in jungles, and done other things, and now he was dying. I was in the hospital and spoke to him. In the course of conversation I said to him, 'You have travelled far and wide and now you are coming to the end of life's journey. How does it stand with you?' He quoted to me that verse in Psalm 23: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me". He was prepared, and that is what counts.

The first question God asks in the Bible was to Adam and Eve. He said, "Where art thou?" Where are you tonight? I think of that question; I think of God coming down to speak to Adam and Eve. Was it a voice of judgement and condemnation when He said to Adam and Eve "Where art thou?" No! I believe it was a voice of mercy. That voice of love reaches down to the sinner today, 'where are you?' What love God has got for the sinner. How wonderful it is that tonight we can tell sinners that God is interested in them. We can tell persons that God loves them. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". Let me tell you tonight that God wants to meet you in love. He does not want to meet you in judgment. May you pay heed to the message tonight.

Across the door of God's house tonight are these wonderful words "Yet there is room". Room for the vilest sinner to come and enter in, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In summer, you sometimes see in the windows of guest houses and hotels a sign which says, 'No Vacancies'. In the windows of heaven there are no such signs. There is still room for the sinner tonight. But remember the time is coming when the door will be shut and shut for ever. Matthew 25, where we read, gives us a little picture of the hopelessness of those who will be left outside then. In the parable they come and knock at the door and the Lord says to them, "I never knew you". Tonight, Jesus wants to save you.

A remarkable thing happened in Peterhead prison a few years ago on Christmas Day. There is a man there serving a double life sentence; some of you may remember that he later got an extra 12 years for being the leader of the group that occupied the roof of Peterhead prison during the riots. Well, on Christmas Day he was in his cell and a warder came round and gave him a parcel. The prisoner felt a great rage and fury because he thought he was being made a fool of. When he opened the parcel there were some toiletries and chocolates in it. There was also a card from a girl in the local primary school and on the front of it was a lot of sheep and one of the sheep was a black sheep. The prisoner thought, 'That's me. I am the black sheep'. He opened the card and it said 'To John, love from Julie'. He thought, 'This girl is not treating me as someone to hate, but as someone to love'. He said, 'Through that card I realised for the first time that Jesus loved me. Those words became the words of Jesus to me: 'John, I love you'. I got down in my cell, and I prayed to the Lord Jesus and He changed my life. What changed me was the fact that Jesus loves me'.

If you never remember anything else from this preaching tonight, may you remember that Jesus loves you. Jesus loves the sinner so much that He could go to the cross to die for you. Ah, what a message we have for you tonight, that this glorious Saviour died for your sins. His precious blood was shed, and can cleanse you from every sin. How thankful we are that we can tell you of the precious blood of Jesus. Let us never forget that we are cleansed because Jesus shed His blood for us. We will praise the Lord Jesus eternally because He has redeemed us by His blood.

Maybe this is the last time you will hear the message. The Spirit will not always strive with you. He is maybe striving tonight. The Lord Jesus wants to hear your cry tonight. The faintest whisper He will hear. If you were to say, "Lord save



me”, ‘He would hear your cry. He will not turn away from you. In the news recently there was a story of someone who cried for help and was not answered. Heaven never fails to answer your cry for forgiveness. Cry to the Lord for mercy.

If you need an ambulance, or the police, or the fire brigade you dial 999. Do you know heaven’s distress number? It is 333. Why do I say that? Because Jeremiah 33 verse 3 says: “Call unto me, and I will answer”. Ah, that call can be yours tonight. May you tonight cry to the Lord Jesus the Saviour. “Confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thy heart that God has raised him from among the dead, and thou shalt be saved”. Saved for time and for eternity.

He will never leave us; in times of difficulty, Jesus will stand by us. We sometimes sing “Jesus, Friend unfailing”. He said “Behold, I am with you all the days”. That is His promise. He will not break His promise. Sometimes we drift far from the Lord—I speak from my own experience—and we find He is at a distance. The distance is from our side. The Lord Jesus wants to be near us; He wants to be a friend to us. He will take care of us; He will be a friend for ever.

May God bless the word for His name’s sake.

*Graham Mair*

## THE CHURCH

I seek the Lord’s help to say a few things about the church, God’s true church. We might well ask, ‘What is the church?’ Sometimes people have very mixed ideas about the church. Some would not think of anything more than buildings, or elaborate architecture; some would equate it with the christian profession in its broadest sense. The scriptures would help us to see what the church is to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God Himself. I am told that the Greek word for the church is ‘ecclesia’ which means a ‘called-out company’. That is what the church is, a

company of persons called out from this world. They are not of the world just as Israel, in God's former dealings, was not to be of the nations. God caused Balaam in his prophecy to say, "It is a people that shall dwell alone." (Numbers 23:9). Abraham, the father of Israel, was called out by God from Ur of the Chaldeans.

It has been God's way throughout the history, since the call of Abraham, to call people out to Himself. In the time in which we live, those that hear the call of God and answer to it are called out persons, set together in His church.

### Christ's Church (Matthew 16:15-18)

In Matthew 16. the Lord asks His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?". Now, in the time of the Lord Jesus there were some strange answers. There were persons who recognised that there was something special about the Lord and some were prepared to concede that He was a special prophet. But He was more than that. Then the Lord asks His own, "But ye, who do ye say that I am?" and Peter gives the wonderful answer: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God". The Lord commends him for that answer and, in effect, says, 'That is nothing ordinary, Peter, my Father has revealed that to you. That has come from God.'

On that confession of who the Lord Jesus is He says that He will build His church. That is true; the only place in the world today where the truth of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ is really known and loved is in the church, among His followers. Are you among them? It is a wonderful privilege! It is persons who have that appreciation in their hearts that are members of His church. Is that not a wonderful thing to have some appreciation of the greatness of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ? Though He was here as Son of Man Peter discerned through the Father's revelation that He was the Christ, God's anointed One, the Messiah, the sent One. That is what the word 'Christ' means, God's sent One. This time it is not just another prophet; God was speaking in the Person of the Son, His final speaking (see Hebrews 1:2).

The Lord says something else too which is very precious; He says, "I will build my assembly". Whose church is it? It belongs to Christ! Is that not wonderful? He died to have it for Himself. It is a great privilege to be a christian and to belong to the church, where the great truths of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, of His glory and of His stoop into Manhood are known and treasured. How well do we understand these things?

## The Church, the dwelling place of the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4)

There is something else unique and distinctive about God's church. In this poor world, full of godless and superstitious persons, there are Christians in whom God's Spirit dwells. They are the same people that make up Christ's assembly, Christ's church.

I read from Acts 2 because here we have the disciples; the Lord had completed His work on Calvary's cross; He had made that supreme sacrifice. In resurrection He had asked His disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high. Here they are obedient to His word and are all together, about 120, and the Holy Spirit comes down upon them in accord with the promise of the Lord Jesus. "There came suddenly a sound out of heaven"—notice, out of heaven—"as of a violent impetuous blowing, and filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as of fire, and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." From that time forward every true believer who puts his faith in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ and commits himself to Him receives the Holy Spirit and becomes part of Christ's assembly.

The Spirit is with us as the power for the Christian pathway. At Pentecost it was demonstrated very remarkably. If we read down a few more verses in Acts 2 we find it was the power that brought conviction to persons of their sins and added, through just one preaching, about three thousand to God's assembly. That power of the Holy Spirit remained with the disciples and continues to the end of the present dispensation. He is the power that is available to each believer. Though it may not be evidenced in quite such an outward way as at the beginning, He is to be the power of our Christian pathway. The Holy Spirit of God is only here, in that sense, in those who make up the church of God, the assembly of Christ on earth. It marks believers out from all the rest of humanity. What a privilege we have as believers in the Lord Jesus.

The Spirit came initially as tongues of fire. You may remember that when the Holy Spirit came down upon the Lord Jesus it says that He came as a dove. That marks out the distinctiveness of the Lord Jesus. A dove is a sensitive bird; when Noah sent the dove out of the ark it found nowhere to rest its feet. A carrion-feeding unclean bird like the raven found somewhere but the dove came back; there was nowhere clean for it to rest. When the Holy Spirit came down He came

as a dove; upon Christ; there were perfect conditions in the Lord Jesus that the Holy Spirit could complacently rest upon. I think that is what it suggests. How unique and perfect our blessed Lord is. In this scripture it is as tongues of fire because there is that with us that we have to learn to judge. He would be the power with us to enable us to overcome when fleshly temptations arise and when we need strengthening to testify to the worth of our Saviour and to preach His Name. So the Holy Spirit has been with believers to help them from Pentecost to the present day and He will remain in the church until the church is raptured to be with Christ. What a marvellous preservative His presence is.

Paul speaks in his second letter to the Thessalonians of, "he who restrains" being here and I think that is a reference to the Holy Spirit. As long as He is here indwelling believers there is a force in this world that powerfully restrains evil. We might say that we see evil rampant on every hand but think how much worse it might well be if there were not believers here, seeking to uphold God's standards, testifying to the righteousness of God. I believe it does have a very restraining effect on what happens in this world.

So there are two remarkable things about the church; it is where the truth of the Person of the Lord Jesus is known and appreciated and it is where the presence of the Spirit of God is known as power for testimony and power for self-judgment.

### **The demonstration of the all-various wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:8-10)**

In Ephesians 3 we see that the all-various wisdom of God is to be seen in the church. It is a test as to what can be said about that. It says here, "in order that now to the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies might be made known through the assembly the all-various wisdom of God". As we look around the world and think of all those who are believers in the Lord Jesus, all those who belong to Him, that have been called out by God and set together in His church, it is amongst them that His all-various wisdom is seen and displayed. We might well ask how that can be; if we look at the church practically there is confusion, failure, and breakdown.

Yet if we look at the context of these verses in Ephesians they are not exactly viewing things from man's side but from God's side. I think we want to get our thoughts elevated because there is a lot of failure, and we have our part in it and we can get very preoccupied with it. Let us understand from God's revealed word

something of what He is doing. Christ's assembly is God's assembly too. In Acts 20 Paul tells the elders of Ephesus to shepherd the assembly of God "which he has purchased with the blood of his own". The Lord Jesus in coming down into manhood came into a condition in which He partook of flesh and blood, in order that He might become subject to death. It was the pouring out of His precious blood that was the purchase price of God's assembly. What a price has been paid. These opening chapters of the epistle to the Ephesians show us something of the power in which God has wrought to set you and me and every believer in the Lord Jesus together in His church and what He is able to do. The same power which wrought in raising Christ from among the dead is towards you and me to bring us into the good of these things and make them real. So it is that the gospel has been preached down the centuries; it started in Jerusalem, went out to Judea, Asia Minor, Europe, and to the whole world. Persons from every race of humanity are to be brought into God's church.

In Old Testament times, His dealings with the human race were largely through the nation of Israel; His blessings extended out beyond Israel but Israel had the prime privilege. Part of the all-various wisdom of God is that at the present time His purposes of blessing, the availability of the gospel, is to whosoever will. The setting together of those who respond to that appeal knows no boundary; it is available to all. God has broken down the middle wall of enclosure, that wall that you might say in some sense He had permitted to be built up, in the old dispensation, because he called Israel to be separate. Yet in the gospel, the message of God's grace and power, His saving power towards all, has broken that down making blessing available to all.

So we see in the church those of all nations; we are all one in Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, bondman or freeman, male or female; God is setting all who come to Christ together in His church. His power to save, His power to change lives and make people think differently from the world, is seen amongst those who belong to His church. Have you had your values changed? Do you think like the world or do you think differently? When we come together is there love flowing between us to bind us together because we have a common love for the Lord Jesus Christ?

We have all come to know that Christ died for us and that God's power is towards us in Him. It is a power that is set to bring us into the greatest of His thoughts and set us together in His church which is going to be His dwelling

place for eternity. That company is to be the bride of Christ. So the wisdom of God is to be seen there; the angels, the heavenly principalities and authorities can see that. When believers come together they ought to be able to look down and say, 'Yes, there is something marvellous there. Those persons have Christ in their hearts; they love the Saviour that God sent into the world. They act in the power of God's Spirit; they are different. Look, those persons love one another, contrary to all that we see in the rest of humanity'. That is to be seen in the church. Does it mark our meetings? Does it mark our lives? Do we walk in the power of that victory ourselves?

God is going to bring these things to completion. Despite all the failure outwardly, the same power that worked in Christ in raising Him from the dead will work in those of His church to bring them through to these glorious things. There is, as this chapter finishes up, glory to God in the assembly unto all generations of the age of ages. These things are to be seen amongst us. I would like to lift our hearts and thoughts to see something of God's thoughts, that we might treasure them and that in some measure they might be seen in our walk and our gatherings. May there be glory to God in our comings together now, glory to God in our walk, here as amongst men. May we show that we belong to a called-out company, a company that belongs to Christ!

The church's head is Christ. He is made by God to be Head over all things to the church. We need to get a view of the church in these glorious ways. I think it is very interesting that an epistle like Ephesians starts with three chapters about these great and glorious thoughts, the purposes of God and how He moved in power to bring them into being, what He is going to display and how we are brought into it. Then the epistle comes to some very practical things. For example, in chapter 4 it says, "Let the stealer steal no more". That but reminds us that we are not to drop the standards which are of God just because of our failing flesh. We are often conscious of our failures. I do not wish to suggest we should be hypocritical, but we must not bring the standard of what God sets forth down to accommodate what we are after the flesh. We have to see God's great exalted thoughts and let them work in our hearts by the power of the Spirit to lift us into the appreciation of what God has before Him.

## Christ the Head of the Church (Ephesians 5:22-27)

God has made Christ to be head over all things to His church. Now, is He head to each one of us? Where do we look to for our direction, for our guidance? I read from Ephesians 5 because the thought of Christ's headship is developed there. We could have read that verse at the end of chapter 1—"and has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all". It is remarkable to speak about the assembly as the fulness of Christ; how great the assembly is! The head is Christ in heaven and His body is here on earth. The body expresses what the head would direct; that is how it works out in a human body. The head gives the thought, the direction, and the body puts it into expression. That is the divine concept; the church is to move through this world expressing what Christ is in heaven above. Where then do we take our direction from?

That is why this letter to the Ephesians becomes exceedingly practical in the second half. We read some of these verses: "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord, for a husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the assembly". "Submit yourselves"—well, it is not a time to be hard on the sisters, because the brothers have a head too. Sometimes perhaps we may lord it over our wives and say, 'I am the head of this house'. But that is not love's way. As a man I have a Head in heaven too. Man's head is Christ and Christ's head is God (see 1 Corinthians 11:3). The assembly's head is Christ.

Can you ever think in the day to come of the church telling Christ what He should or should not do? It is unthinkable! All the wisdom and divine resource rests in Him. He shows us what is suitable to the conduct of believers. Where do we find it? The directions are in His word. Yet sadly how easily we may set our own standards regardless of what the word says. If we take the ground of being true believers, let us be guided by the Lord's word. He has given an order of things that is for our blessing and the order of headship is just one thing that is for our blessing. The way we deport ourselves, the way we are to love one another, these things are to be seen in the church; if they are not seen in the church there is little chance of them being seen anywhere. In a day of brokenness, it is open to us to hold on to these truths and in our christian walk and gatherings to seek to walk in accordance with these things.

*James Bryan*

## THE ELIXIR

Teach me, my God and King,  
In all things Thee to see,  
That what I do in anything,  
To do it as for Thee.

A servant with this clause  
Makes drudgery divine:  
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,  
Makes that and th' action fine.

This is the famous stone  
That turneth all to gold:  
For that which God doth touch and own  
Cannot for less be told.

*George Herbert (1593-1633)*

## HOME

Come Lord, my head doth burn, my heart is sick,  
While Thou dost ever, ever stay:  
Thy long deferrings wound me to the quick,  
My spirit gaspeth night and day.  
O show Thyself to me,  
Or take me up to Thee!

*George Herbert (1593-1633)*



## GOSPEL TRUTH

The two items below are reprinted from Brian Parr's regular column in the Chester local newspaper. The articles have a wide circulation and they are reprinted here partly so that readers can pray for God's blessing to flow from these testimonies.

He was carrying a full shopping bag in each hand, and perhaps without noticing this, I offered him a gospel leaflet. I was rather surprised at his response when he said: 'I've enough to carry, I can't carry the sin of the world as well!'

Of course he couldn't carry the sins of the world and I told him so, but I also told him of One who had! John the Baptist called this Person, 'the Lamb of God, the taker away of the sin of the world' (John 1:29). He was speaking of Jesus the sinless One, who alone could offer to God an acceptable sacrifice for sin.

This Jesus did, once for all when He offered Himself, bearing our sins, in His own body on the tree. 1 Peter 2:24.

We cannot bear a single sin of our own, to satisfy God, so we should thank God for Jesus who bore them all for us, and let us receive Him as our own personal Saviour.

JESUS came and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace be unto you'. John 20:19.

I don't know whether we can imagine what it would be like if the per-

son we had seen buried three days before, was suddenly standing alive, before us. We would certainly be terribly shocked and somewhat afraid.

Well—that was what actually happened to the Lord's disciples. They had seen Him crucified and they had seen His body put into a tomb—and now, suddenly, He was standing in their midst.

Immediately He spoke to them saying, 'Peace be unto you'.

He calmed their troubled hearts, as He has for thousands of His followers ever since.

Some time ago, a young woman, who had fallen into terrible despair through alcohol and drugs, came to find deliverance through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

She said in her testimony, 'Jesus Christ has unburdened me of all my sinful past, and has given me a new life. There is nothing for me to be proud of in this—I just don't deserve it, but there is only one word that describes my inner feelings now, and it is 'peace'.

Yes, it is still true that Jesus, the risen and living Saviour, gives to all who believe in Him a real and inner peace.

## EXTRACTS FROM THE MINISTRY OF J. G. BELLETT

Christ is your lesson book as well as your teacher...Is any book so worthy of reading as that book we call Jesus?

Our power in drawing others after the Lord mainly rests in our joy and communion with Him ourselves.

"And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping" (Luke 22:45). They were His thought, not He theirs...They could not watch with Him one hour. So it is now. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us"; do we ever live to love Him, to serve Him? He ever lives for you; do you ever live for Him?

The tempter would lead us to judge of God by the dark shadings of many a passage of our history here. But the Spirit of God would have us acquaint ourselves with Him in the beautiful light of the gospels, the glory that shines now in the face of Jesus Christ.

David...when a youth in the fight could say even to a giant: "This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand", but afterwards said in his heart: "I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul"...Saul's hand which David feared was not so big as Goliath's hand which David despised; but then Christ was not so large and full before the eye of David's faith afterwards as He had been before in the valley of Elah.

"Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him". Nothing peculiar ushered in that glorious hour.

No big expectation or strange events gave token of its coming. It was the natural heavenly close of an undeviating heavenly journey.

Faith is never too bold to please Him.

Would that we knew our God as He is to be known, for his praise and our comfort! Love delights to be used. Love is wearied with ceremoniousness...The intimacy of faith is according to His grace and ceremony is but a weariness to Him.

Being alone with Jesus is the sinner's first position, it is the beginning of his joy, and no one has the right to meddle with it...Sin casts us upon God alone...We must not surrender to any the right of God to talk with us alone about our sins.

Nothing perhaps has been a more common source of... falling out by the way than the holding of favourite religious opinions, or the undue, disproportioned estimation of certain doctrines or points of truth.

If we were only happy in Him, we should work much better for Him. It is joy in Christ that gains the victory over the world. Why are we in subjection to the world? Just because we have not found in Christ all the joy we ought to find.

We need not so much to covet information about Him as power to use divinely what we know.

The charm of sin is gone the moment it is perpetrated.

*J. G. Bellett (1795 - 1864)*

## A CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD — 2

Galatians 1: 3-5

3: 2-4

4: 4-7

Romans 8: 1-10, 14-17

The purpose of this meeting is to help us in our relations with God. The most important thing in our lives is the relationship of our souls with God. We were speaking last week of the need of certainty and assurance. [This address was printed in "Living Water" No. 18.] It is God's mind we should all be certain and sure in our relations with Him. There is no reason why we should not be, because our blessing and acceptance before God depends entirely upon the Person and work of Christ; our salvation depends upon the Person and work of Christ, therefore everyone who believes on Him ought to be certain and sure in their relations with God, because Christ cannot fail. He cannot fail because of who He is: the One by whom all things were made, "all things were created by him, and for him" (Colossians 1:16).

When redemption needed to be accomplished He did not delegate it to another. The very One by whom and for whom all things were made Himself took on the work of redemption. How could He fail? He came into manhood on purpose to accomplish that work. He said, "Sacrifice and offering thou willedst not; but thou hast prepared me a body" (Hebrews 10:5). He took that body prepared for Him on purpose that He might lay it down as a sacrifice for sins. In fact, it says He has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

The sacrifices and offerings of old could never take away sins, but the Lord Jesus has borne our sins in His body on the tree and now He has risen and ascended and appears in the presence of God for us. His place in the presence of God determines the place of every believer in Him. Our salvation rests upon Him and His finished work and therefore everyone who believes on Him should have certainty as to forgiveness and acceptance with God.

We were noticing last week that the work of Christ on the cross is presented in different ways in Scripture. It is one work and we come into the gain of it from God's side in one stroke, as it were, when we believe on Jesus. The guilty need

justifying. We were all guilty, but are justified by faith and have peace with God. The guilty get peace. The defiled need sanctifying. Sin has defiled us all and makes us unfit for the presence of God. As we understand that we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all we have boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Then enemies need reconciling. We were all enemies against God — sin had made us so. But we have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son— that is what God has done for His enemies. God gave His Son for those who were enemies and as we understand that we rejoice in God. Thus we have peace, boldness and joy.

Tonight I want to go a step further and to speak of blessing, dwelling mainly on Galatians 3:14 which says, “that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”. I want to speak of these two things, first, blessing and then the promise of the Spirit through faith. Not only are we justified by faith but the blessing also comes to us through faith and we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. All that we receive from God through our Lord Jesus Christ is on the principle of faith.

You may say to me, ‘Surely those things you have already spoken about are blessings?’ They are. Justification, sanctification and reconciliation are great blessings, but they are blessings that are a necessity to us because of sin. They are blessings which free us from the consequences of sin and put us right with God. What I wish to speak of now is the positive blessing that was in the heart of God over and above those blessings which remove the consequences of sin. God’s love is so great that it would not satisfy Him simply to remove the consequences of sin. He had purposes of blessing for man before the world began. It says in Ephesians 1 that He marked us out beforehand—that means before the world began—for sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself. That is the greatest blessing—the blessing of sonship. It is blessing beyond anything that could have entered into the heart of man. As the Scripture says, “Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man’s heart, which God has prepared for them that love him, but God has revealed to us by his Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

In Luke 15 the father falls on the neck of the returning son and covers him with kisses — a practical illustration of reconciliation showing the way God delights to receive returning ones. But then the father says, “Bring out the best robe and

clothe him in it, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry: for this my son was dead and has come to life, was lost and has been found" (Luke 15:22-24).

You see, the saved sinner was a son in purpose even before he was a sinner in practice. God had this blessing in mind before the world began. Everything was prepared. He says, "Bring out the best robe and clothe him in it". He would make the returning one entirely at home in His presence, in His house. Who could be more at home than one who is clothed in the best robe? How thoroughly fitted for his place in his father's house—a ring on his hand, shoes on his feet; it gives us an idea of the wealth of the blessing God bestows upon us.

Then, if we are sons, we are also heirs, as it says in Galatians 4:7 "So thou art no longer bondman, but son; but if son, heir also through God". I can conceive of nothing more blessed. What could be greater than to be before God as His sons and heirs? How rich we are! So the blessing of God is sonship and inheritance, because God would give His sons the portion proper to sons: the inheritance.

Scripture says, "for all things are yours ... and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:21,23). Paul speaks of "having nothing, yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:10). As Christians in this world we have no part nor lot in it, and yet everything belongs to us because we are sons of God! Everything belongs to God and therefore everything belongs to the sons of God. He has appointed the Lord Jesus, who is the Son, the Heir of all things. The time is coming when Jesus will take up the inheritance; it is all His by right. He is the Son and the Heir. We are sons of God and we are joint heirs with Christ. Thus the time is soon coming when we shall inherit all things. If we understood this we should not hanker after possessions at the present time. Everything is ours, but we do not want to possess them until Christ is in possession. We do not want them while He is rejected and the usurper is in control. Yet all things are ours. We are sons and heirs of God. Such is the blessing with which God has blessed us.

I want to say a brief word as to what this has cost. It says in Galatians 3:13-14, "Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, (for it is written, Cursed is every one hanged upon a tree,) that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith". The curse is the very opposite of the bless-

ing. They are opposite just as life and death are opposite. Jesus died for us that we might live. He bore the wrath of God that we might be justified. But there is nothing that can be more touching than this, that Christ has redeemed us out of the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.

Have you thought of that? It is written, "Cursed is every one hanged upon a tree". Jesus was hanged upon a tree for you and me. He bore the shame of public execution, and in being hanged upon the tree He became a curse for us. The curse that the law pronounced upon us fell upon Him. The law was given that man might earn blessing if he could, but it proved that man could only earn the curse. All the law could do was to pronounce curse upon us, because we are all law-breakers, and the Lord Jesus became a curse for us in order that the blessing might come to us.

The love of God was behind it because, "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, come of woman, come under law, that he might redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship" (Galatians 4:4,5). The love of God was in this matter—the blessed God who would not only have forgiven sinners in His presence but sons.

I wonder whether we have all appreciated this great blessing. I am assuming we are all believers here, but have we laid hold of this blessing? "We are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). You may say, 'I am a believer and know my sins are forgiven and I am justified'. But have you grasped the fact that if you are a believer you are one of the sons of God? The passage we read says so, "ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus". Then it says in chapter 4:6 "But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father".

This is a marvellous blessing. Love has abounded beyond all our need. It is a love which not only forgives and reconciles, but also bestows the gift of sonship upon us. Think of the magnitude of it: "that we might receive sonship". We receive it as a gift by faith in Christ Jesus. Much less would have satisfied me. Our words might be very like those of the younger son in Luke 15, "make me as one of thy hired servants". But that would not have satisfied God. That is the point. It would not satisfy God to have us in His presence on any level less than in sonship. It is to satisfy the love of God. What a God He is, that we are brought into His

presence in the blessed relationship of sons clothed with the best robe. How miserable are the efforts of our hearts to work out our own righteousness! "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Our efforts to merit salvation are wretched and doomed to failure!

But think of the favour and grace of God: "Bring out the best robe". If we could have kept the law of Moses and earned life on that basis we would not have been given the best robe. We should just have been servants. But we are taken into favour in the Beloved. We share Christ's place as Man. He said when He rose from the dead, "go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God" (John 20:17). We are loved with the love which rests on Him and share the place which is His in the presence of His God and Father. How marvellous is the love of God!

Now, we are told, "because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father". This is a wonderful thing because God intends the relationship to be real. God has blessed us. He has made us His sons and heirs. All things are ours, but we have not come into the inheritance yet. In the meantime He has given us the Spirit so that the things that are actually future might be real and present to us. The moment we realise that the Spirit of God is given to us we can never doubt the reality of christianity, because we cannot limit the Spirit of God. God Himself, in the Person of the Spirit, has come to dwell in the believer that we might enjoy the blessing now.

The Holy Spirit is the Earnest of our inheritance, and brings home to us the present reality both of the relationship and the wealth proper to it.

The greatest present blessing the believer has is the gift of the Holy Spirit, for He brings with Him the power and enjoyment of every other blessing. That is why the Scripture says, "that the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith". There is the blessing and the present enjoyment of the blessing by the Spirit.

I would like to raise the question--Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? You may say, 'I am not very certain about it'. If that is the case, ask the Lord to help you to make room for the Spirit. If you are a believer the Spirit desires to fill you. Ask Him to do so. It is a question of making room and giving

place to Him in your heart and as you do so you will come into the joy of the blessing. "Because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father". The Spirit comes into our hearts as the Spirit of God's Son giving us all the feelings proper to the relationship.

The word "Abba", suggests the greatest nearness—just as a child can nestle close to its father. "Abba" is one of the most simple words in human language and I believe the use of it is intended to show what a sense of nearness we have to God in the power of the Spirit.

Now I wish to say a brief word on Romans, chapter 8, because the question will arise, 'How can I be sustained in the enjoyment of the blessing and the relationship that God has brought me into?' The chapter shows how sufficient the Holy Spirit is to bring us experimentally into the enjoyment of sonship and maintain us in it. Everything depends on the Spirit and our giving place to the Spirit. Do not, however, mix up your joy with the gift itself.

If you are a believer, God has given you the gift of sonship, whether you enjoy it or not. We are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Do not let your feelings rob you of the assurance of that.

Then, if I am not walking in the power of the Spirit in practical deliverance, how can I enjoy sonship? The place and relationship is still mine, but how can I enjoy it? How could a soul wrestling with the experiences spoken of in Romans 7 enjoy sonship? "I am fleshly" Paul says, "sold under sin", and he ends the chapter by saying, "O wretched man that I am!" A man like that cannot enjoy sonship. Yet if he is a believer the verse quoted remains true — we are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

I would like to leave an impression on your heart that God has no thought of forgiving your sins, reconciling you to Himself, giving you the gift of sonship and creating in your heart all the longings to be in the enjoyment of these things and then leaving you down here as a poor slave to sin in the flesh. If He had not given you the Spirit you would still be a slave, carnal and sold under sin, only able to say, "O wretched man that I am!" You would have the desire to do what is right and yet, if you had not the Spirit, you would not have an atom of power. Sin in the flesh would get the better of you every minute of every day and you would be



indeed a wretched man. Unbelievers go along in the flesh and are undisturbed though conscience may sometimes trouble them. But the believer cannot be happy if the flesh is active. He has forgiveness and knows the blessing of God and hates evil. But he has the flesh still in him and were it not for the gift of the Spirit he would still be led along as a slave by the lusts and desires of the flesh, however much he desired to do good.

God does not save us from eternal judgment, bless us and create desires in us to please Him and then leave us to our own resources without any power. That would not be like God. I would like you to have as much confidence in the presence of the Spirit and His power to enable you to be here for God as you have in Christ and His work upon the cross. You should have the same confidence.

You say, 'I trust Christ for my eternal salvation'. But now go further! Rely on the Spirit for every moment of your responsible life here. He has come to dwell in you—let Him have His way in you. If you are prepared to judge the flesh and give the Spirit His place and let Him lead you, the Spirit is perfectly capable of maintaining you here in complete deliverance from sin in the flesh and in the full joy of salvation and sonship, and that is what this chapter, the eighth of Romans, brings out. As it says, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death".

Chapter 7 of Romans shows the terrible power of sin and it is in your flesh as well as mine. It shows we have no strength against it. But chapter 8 shows the complete victory of the believer because he has the Spirit, is subject to the Spirit and has come under the leading of the Spirit. It has set him free. We can afford to have confidence in the Spirit who has come to dwell in us to give us power. Look to Him and seek His help in these matters. We seek the Lord's help in the face of the opposition of the world, but when it is a matter of sin in the flesh we prove what the Spirit can be to us—how He can help us. Set your mind to walk according to the Spirit and He will lead you, and in Galatians 5:18 it says, "if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under law". Many christians think that it is their business to go back to the law of Moses and to try to keep it. That is not christianity at all. A christian is never called upon to do that. He is called upon to walk in the Spirit and he will in no wise fulfil the lusts of the flesh. If you walk in the Spirit you are not under law. Why put yourself under law? If we walk in the Spirit we do not need the law. If you put yourself under law it means you are trying to keep the

law in the power of the flesh; yet the fact that you came to Christ as your Saviour was really an admission of your helplessness. Why change your ground now? "Having begun in Spirit" Paul tells the Galatians, "are ye going to be made perfect in flesh?" (Galatians 3:3).

I trust these remarks will help us in a practical way. Who of us has not tried to be made perfect in flesh? You think you are going to be a very fine christian and can be such in your own strength. You are doomed to disappointment. You will lose the joy of your salvation—not the salvation itself, but the enjoyment of it. There is no such thing as perfection in the flesh. As far as you walk according to the Spirit you will answer to God's word to Abraham— "Walk before my face, and be perfect" (Genesis 17:1). It can only be in the Spirit. We may fail a many times, but let us get back to walking in the Spirit so that we can walk before God's face and be perfect. No credit attaches to us. It is on account of the Spirit of God dwelling in us.

God Himself delivers us. "Who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" cries Paul in Romans 7. A man in that state could not enjoy sonship. God delivers us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Jesus bore the curse of the law for us (all the judgment due to sin in the flesh) in order that we might receive the Spirit. God thus delivers us through Jesus Christ our Lord by way of the gift of the Spirit. He would have us all delivered walking according to the Spirit.

We are to be filled with the Spirit in the same measure as we are filled with faith. The two are put together in Acts 6. One man is said to be "full of faith and the Holy Spirit" and another, "full of the Holy Spirit and of faith". Paul develops the great principle of faith in Galatians. Those on the principle of faith are Abraham's sons and we need to continue on the principle of faith day by day. Paul says "I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20). The more we are full of faith the more we shall be full of the Spirit. A man who is full of faith has his vision filled with Christ. Self is displaced. As the Son of God fills the vision, the Spirit of God fills the soul. Walking in the Spirit thus involves walking by faith. "The righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit". We do not put ourselves under law, yet the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us and we move along in communion with God. As many as are led by the Spirit of God these are sons of God, and thus we enjoy sonship in a practical and experimental way.

Sonship was given to us when we were first converted, but we come into the daily enjoyment of it as we give place to the Spirit and are led by the Spirit. What father would think of putting his sons under a code of rules? We expect it at school, but not at home. Sons do not need rules: "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear" (that is, we are not under the law) "but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father".

How wonderful it is in our daily path with its duties and sufferings, on account of the testimony or through ill-health or other causes, to be led by the Spirit of God and to have the Spirit of sonship whereby we cry "Abba, Father". What a difference this makes. It gilds everything with heavenly light; whatever the circumstances may be we are able to cry "Abba, Father" in them. The Lord Himself used these words in Gethsemane's dark hour.

I trust some impressions will remain with us of the greatness of the blessing: nothing less than sonship, the inheritance of all things, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to maintain us in present deliverance from the power of sin and in the practical enjoyment of the blessing.

May God grant it for His name's sake.

*G.R. Cowell*

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