

Living Water — Issue No 24

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WHERE DO YOU STAND?

I saw the Lord standing upon the altar

Amos 9:1

And Jehovah said, Behold, there is a place by me: there shalt thou stand on the rock.

Exodus 33:21

I waited patiently for Jehovah; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. And he brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock; he hath established my goings: And he hath put a new song in my mouth, praise unto our God. Many shall see it, and fear, and shall confide in Jehovah.

Psalms 40:1-3

Tonight, I want to ask if we each know where we stand with God? Many do not care but there is nothing more important. We use the expression "where do you stand" in ordinary affairs because when we know where we stand in any matter we have assurance and confidence. Let me say, dear friend, tonight it is all important that we have assurance as to our eternal destiny, as to where we stand with God.

We could ask where Adam stood when he was hiding in the garden, or where Saul of Tarsus stood when he was on the way to Damascus, and it is the same answer in each case—they were lost!

We could write that over the whole human race. The truth is we have no place to stand. We are all sinners; we have all come short of God's holy standard. The psalmist, David, cried out of the depths, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing" (Psalm 69: 1, 2). That is our condition before God. No one is any different.

The prophet says that we are like sheep that have gone astray, for we have turned every one of us to our own way (Isaiah 53: 6). We have not gone God's way. I sometimes hear people say, 'I have always been a christian'. No one has always been a christian! One thing we have always been, and that is sinners! We are born in sin, shapen in iniquity (see Psalm 51: 5 AV) and as such we are lost and without any ray of hope, apart from Christ.

David said, "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing", he felt his need. "Save me, O God", he cried! Oh, if only men and women and children would feel their need, and their lost condition and cry out to the Saviour.

In another Psalm we read, "Out of the depths do I call upon thee, Jehovah. Lord, hear my voice; Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. If thou, Jah, shouldest mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand?" (Psalm 130: 1-3). Friend, there would be no hope for us if God came to deal with sin, apart from Christ!

I read in Exodus where God says, "There is a place to stand" and God wants us to stand tonight where He stands. That is why I read from the prophet Amos, because he says, "I saw the Lord standing upon the altar". Friend, the Lord Jesus was once on that altar. That altar speaks to my heart of Calvary's cross where Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the One who came down from heaven in love for guilty sinners, offered Himself spotless to God.

There had been many offerings for sin, but no permanent solution for sin until Jesus came! The scripture says, "now once in the consummation of the ages he has been manifested for the putting away of sin by his sacrifice" (Hebrews 9: 26). We can tell you tonight, dear friend, of a sacrifice which has been made, once for all.

From Adam onwards, four thousand years of man's sinful history passed until the consummation of the ages when God would send forth His Son to deal with sin. John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29). How great the Lord Jesus is! Of course, He was wonderful in His life as He displayed the kindness and love of God to men, touching the leper, giving sight to the blind and casting out demons. The grace of God was flowing out to men and women and children. It is no different today; the power of the Lord Jesus Christ is unchanged. He is doing mighty miracles today in the lives of men and women and children.

He is casting out demons, literally. He is dealing with all the problems of our day; the greatest of all is the problem of sin, the deep mire that David spoke of, in which he was sinking, from which he could not extricate himself.

I remember seeing written on a gravestone in a cemetery those words from the hymn 'Rock of Ages':-

*'Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling'.*

Friend, when you are stripped of everything, every possession, every friend, every relative, everything--what is there to stand on? What is there to cling to? Only the Lord Jesus Christ and His cross.

There, on that cross at Calvary, He offered Himself, the perfect offering for sin. Nothing less would do. There could be no other remedy. He offered Himself spotless to God (Hebrews 9: 14). No wonder the Lord Jesus felt as He did as He approached the hour of His suffering, as He was in anguish in the garden of Gethsemane and He anticipated there from the Father's hand the cup of wrath. We read in the prophet: "Awake, O sword, against ... my fellow" (Zechariah 13: 7). Think of God's judgment sword. Judgment that I deserved as a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, judgment that you deserved, it fell on Jesus.

Think of the Lord Jesus taking our vile sins upon Himself, in His holy body, and bearing them. Peter says, "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2: 24). That was love!

Friend, if you want to know what love is you have to look at Calvary's cross. The love of God is boundless, perfect, causeless, full and free. There was no reason at all in us for God to give His Son, for Jesus to take our sins upon Himself. It was love! No wonder Paul, who had been an enemy of the Lord, said, "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me" (Galatians 2: 20).

Think of the grace of the Saviour, giving Himself on the cross, taking all the load. He says, "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11: 28). The hymn puts it:-

*'O Lord, what burdens Thou didst bear!
Our load was laid on Thee;
Thou stoodest for the sinner there
To bear all ill for me.'*

He took the full burden of our sins, those committed before conversion and those committed after, every single sin. Jesus took them all. Who can ever fathom what our Saviour suffered? If we want to know what God feels about sin, we look at the cross and we see that He forsook His own Son! Why? Because He was made sin for us. That is how God felt about sin. It is not a light matter. God hates sin. The proof of it is that He forsook His own beloved Son. "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5: 21).

Think of those three hours, the darkness that came over the land which shrouded that holy scene, when Jesus made atonement for our sins. No human eye could penetrate; when Jesus was on that cross He was truly alone. His disciples could not go any further. They could not go to the cross; Jesus went there alone in love for you and me and in the darkness of Calvary He satisfied a holy God in relation to my guilty sins. What a Saviour!

A believer once said to me, 'The greatest words ever uttered on earth were the words that Jesus uttered on the cross, "It is finished"' (John 19: 30) What did they mean? They meant a permanent remedy for our sins. For four thousand years of man's history there had been no permanent solution.

No wonder someone said that the cross of Christ is the centre of eternity. Everything looked on to it and everything for God flows out of it. So, before Jesus died, He cried, "It is finished". These words mean, 'Paid in full'. Jesus paid it all for you and me.

We sang together of the blood, the water and the blood that flowed from the side of Jesus. He was already dead! No man took His life; He laid it down Himself (John 10:18)—amazing words. The originator of life had entered into death and from His pierced side His precious blood flowed forth. "Without blood-shedding there is no remission" (Hebrews 9: 22). There is no other remedy tonight but the blood of Jesus to wash away our sins, to cleanse a sinner's soul. Would you be free from your burden of sin? There is power in the blood; "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1: 7).

Redemption's work was complete and on the third day God raised His Son from the dead. "Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father" (Romans 6: 4). Christ is now exalted at God's right hand as Prince and

Saviour (see Acts 5: 31, Revelation 1: 5). God sets Him forth tonight as “a mercy seat, through faith in his blood” (Romans 3: 25) and, friend, tonight the gospel is going out because God stands on the altar. He stands on the finished work of Jesus on the cross and He sets forth His Son as a mercy seat through faith in His blood.

He would say to us tonight, as He said to Moses of old, “Behold there is a place by me: there shalt thou stand on the rock”. I think that is a lovely word. Tonight God is saying, ‘I want you to stand where I stand. I want you to stand on the only ground that is secure and safe for eternity and that is on the sacrifice and finished work of Jesus on the cross’.

It is wonderful that God would say, ‘I want you to come over to My side. You may be a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, but through the work of Jesus on the cross and through His precious blood, I have a place for you to stand. There is a place by Me to stand upon the Rock.’

So, you can come to Jesus; you can stand where God stands and be absolutely safe and sure of salvation for time and for eternity. What a Saviour! What a mighty work is the glorious, finished work of Jesus.

In Psalm 40 which we read, the Psalmist is crying to God, and he says He “heard my cry”. God hears the feeblest cry. The scripture says, “Jehovah’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear” (Isaiah 59: 1).

He is reaching out in blessing, as He did to David here, “and he brought me up out of the pit of destruction”. I do not know what David understood about that but we know that apart from Christ we would have no hope. We would face a lost eternity and the blackness of darkness for ever. Think of the awfulness of a lost eternity. God reached into the pit and lifted David up. “He brought me...out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock.” God is saying tonight, ‘I want you to stand by Me on the Rock, the Rock of Ages.’

Many people are building their lives on the sand. Great personalities, great heroes might have everything going for them but if it is all built on the sand then when the storm comes the house will fall. (Matthew 7: 27). The wise man built

his house upon the rock. When the rains came and the winds blew that house stood. So the very simplest believer who puts his faith and trust in Jesus is absolutely safe and secure for time and eternity.

It says, "and he brought me up, ... and set my feet upon a rock; he has established my goings." Jesus gives us a purpose in life. Many folk today have no idea of where their lives are leading, or why they are here, but when you believe in Jesus you begin to see that God has a purpose in life for you, a real objective.

People worry about conditions in the world and they feel confused, uncertain and without hope. The hymn writer says:-

*'Seems thy path to lead in darkness,
Where no ray of hope is known?'*

God is saying, 'I want you to stand on the Rock, on the Lord Jesus and His work at Calvary and then you will have something worth living for.'

Saul of Tarsus was an enemy of the Lord Jesus before he was saved but when he wrote to Timothy he said, 'Not only have you been acquainted with my teaching, but you have been acquainted with my purpose' (see 2 Timothy 3: 10). Paul was a man of purpose. He had got a link with the Saviour in the glory and he knew where he was going. God wants all of us to have our feet on the Rock, to be sure of our path and to have a new song in our mouths.

Those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb sing a new song of praise unto our God. "And they sing a new song, saying, thou art worthy to take the book, and to open its seals; because thou hast been slain, and hast redeemed to God, by thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5: 9). Today, God is bringing people to Jesus out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. It is the only way of salvation; it is the only Rock; it is the only place to stand to be secure for eternity.

"Praise unto our God. Many shall see it, and fear, and shall confide in Jehovah" (Psalm 40:3). God wants people to see that there is a difference in our lives. "Many shall see it". David was a man who had been down in the miry clay of sin and God raised him up and put his feet on a rock, established his goings. People

could see it, could see that he was different. So something of Christ is to be seen in our lives. God gives us the Holy Spirit in order that we might have power to live here as a testimony to our Saviour in the glory. "Many shall see it, and fear, and shall confide in Jehovah." It does not say that you have to claim anything but that there is something to be seen of Jesus.

As believing we get out of the broad way of destruction and into the narrow way that leads to life. It says in the word, "and they are few who find it" (Matthew 7: 14). May we be among those who find the way to life tonight, as trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His finished work, and so stand where God stands.

If we lack assurance it is because we do not realise our standing with God. He stands on the finished work of Jesus at Calvary and He says to us, 'There is a place by Me, for you'. Then He will give us this new song in our mouths, "Praise unto our God", and bring us into His testimony in a living way. Paul says, "that ye may be harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation; among whom ye appear as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" (Philippians 2: 15, 16). Others are to see that there is something worth having in Jesus. What a wonderful Saviour—surely we can commend Him to others!

The man that we read of in Mark chapter 5 who had been delivered from the power of demons went home and told the people what great things the Lord had done for him, and many would have seen it. (Mark 5: 20). The difference was there for everyone to see. He had a new song in his mouth as he went back to his home and to his country, praising God!

May we all be filled with peace and assurance through believing in Jesus tonight, for His name's sake.

Brian Parr

Gospel at Hampton, 3rd November 1996

ENDURANCE

Hebrews 12 : 1-3

Romans 5 : 1-5

James 5 : 10-11

From the scriptures read it will be evident that I feel burdened to speak about endurance. Sometimes the pathway seems to be very steep and difficult and it is easy to give up, but each one of us has to be an overcomer. Each of us needs endurance.

Endurance means 'suffering without yielding'. All the scriptures read show that there is marvellous fruit to be secured by those who continue in the christian way, the way of faith, despite everything that comes against them. The writer of the book of the Hebrews tells us in chapter 11 of some of the men and women of faith and says, "If they had called to mind that from which they went out, they had opportunity to have returned". They could have gone back but they did not do so. Having, in type, embraced the Lord Jesus as Saviour, and having been called out from everything to follow Him, they persisted in following Him even though they did not receive the promise. We have to remember that we are in a day of faith and there is nothing tangible to show for the hope that we have within us. That is what the writer of the Hebrews says about faith, that it is, "the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen". When you walk in the pathway of faith you have a conviction about something you have never seen and have never actually touched and so endurance is one of the qualities needed.

The scripture we read in Hebrews 12 says of the Lord that He "endured the cross"; He "endured so great contradiction from sinners". Our attention is drawn to Jesus. He both set on the pathway of faith and He completed it. Now He is in glory but here He was a Man of faith. He counted on God to raise Him from among the dead. In Psalm 16 the Lord said prophetically, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol, neither wilt thou allow thy Holy One to see corruption". He counted on God to raise Him from among the dead but He had to wait until that moment actually came. When He was raised and glorified and seated at God's right hand the pathway of faith for the Lord Jesus was complete.

Isaiah says prophetically of the Lord: "He shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground" (Isaiah 53:2). Isaiah had an impression of the way that blessed Man would draw nothing from the scene into which He came. There was nothing here that supported or sustained the Lord Jesus; He was sustained from above. Someone has said that a christian is to be like a tree that is upside down; our roots are to be in heaven in Christ and the fruit is to be in testimony down here.

When the Lord Jesus was here He endured all that was put upon Him. He endured suffering, opposition, the "contradiction from sinners" and never gave way. He suffered without yielding. Wonderful Saviour! The scriptures speak of "so great contradiction from sinners". Think of how He was contradicted. There were those who argued about what He said, denied it and made folly of it, yet He was the Light of the World. He had wisdom far exceeding Solomon's. When Christ spoke, God spoke and He uttered things that had been hidden from before the foundation of the world. He knew every thought, purpose and counsel of God. He knew the past, the present and the future and He Himself was the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. He "endured ... contradiction from sinners": that of Herod, Pilate, the soldiers of the governor that made game of Him, the passers-by that mocked Him, His own familiar friend that betrayed Him, Peter that denied Him. Think of it—He endured it all.

In Exodus 21 the Hebrew bondman says distinctly, "I will not go free". Jesus weighed what He had to go through, as only He could, and His decision was, "I will not go free". He endured everything that was put upon Him. He says in the garden of Gethsemane, "this is your hour and the power of darkness". He endured the cross, when the forces of evil, man, the devil and God's wrath were poured upon Him. No one could touch Him until His hour came but when it came He was left alone and He endured the cross.

Then think of what He endured when forsaken of God. "Our fathers", says the Psalmist "cried unto thee, and were delivered" (Psalm 22:4 & 5). When the Lord Jesus cried on the cross He was not answered. The sun hid its face. There was great darkness so that man did not look on the Creator while He endured the cross. He suffered without yielding. Our future blessing and eternal hope centred on the immovability and endurance of the Saviour. Blessed and glorious Man!

He is in glory now and we are told in Hebrews that if we are going to run the race we must look "steadfastly on Jesus". Someone has said that it is easy to lay aside every weight and sin which entangles us if we are looking steadfastly on Jesus but if we are not doing so we will find it very, very difficult.

Romans 5 says: "Having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace towards God". That is wonderful. The believer in Jesus has been justified on the principle of faith and is now cleared of every charge against him. That is what justification is. The work of Christ, the blood of Christ, is so efficacious that the sinner who believes is cleared from the charge of every sin totally. I can be in God's presence in complete peace towards Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is wonderful to walk in this troubled scene with a peace in the heart that nothing can disturb. Having peace towards God we stand in the wonderful blessing that God is favourable to us in Christ. Can you boast in that? Can you boast in the assurance that God's favour will be yours eternally? That is what Paul is saying in this epistle. We boast in the favour in which we stand.

Now you will find if you are in that position that the devil will not leave you alone and the tribulations and problems will begin to come. I do not know your circumstances or the pressures you have but Paul says that you can boast in tribulation. I do not know how Paul could do that. When sorrow or pressure or difficulty come your way do you boast in the tribulation? Look back over your life to those dark periods and what will you find? The tribulation did not seem to lift and that grief or pressure continued on you but it worked endurance in your soul and you hung on. You suffered but you did not yield; tribulation worked endurance. Then you find that endurance worked experience in your soul; you began to learn something about the God who loved you. You began to learn something more than you ever knew before about the God who cared for you.

What is said about priesthood in Hebrews goes a long way beyond what the high priest was in the Old Testament. The writer throws light on what priesthood really is. In the hands of Jesus today priesthood is marked by compassion, sympathy, tenderness and feeling. I do not think that it was quite like that when the priest went in on the day of atonement and sprinkled the blood on and before the mercy seat. I do not think that the priest was touched with feelings for the infirmities of the people. Yet our High Priest, Jesus, is able to sympathise with our infirmities and our weakness. A heart in heaven beats in sympathy with yours. I remember someone once saying, 'Have you ever thought that your name

has been on the lips of Christ today?' That is the priest. He cares about you, He loves you and He is there to maintain you in the presence of God. The priest is on man's side towards God. I suggest that experience teaches us that we have a blessed One in heaven who cares about us, who loves us and is touched with the feelings of our weaknesses, and sympathises with us.

Paul is saying here that God is going to bring out of every one of our sorrowful experiences something of benefit for the one passing through it and also for His own glory. Paul tells us that experience works hope. The hope springs up—He is going to deliver me soon! How do you think Daniel felt during those seventy years in Babylon? Daniel was carried away as a youth and year after year passed and still there was no deliverance. Daniel knew that it was going to be seventy years before the captivity was turned. He knew from Jeremiah's prophecy, so he waited; he hung on. Daniel prayed towards Jerusalem; the evening oblation was not celebrated; it had lapsed and yet Daniel prayed towards Jerusalem at the time of the evening oblation. Jerusalem's gates were burned with fire; there was nothing in the city which was in ruins.

Daniel prayed towards the city at the time of the evening oblation and the angel flies swiftly and touches him and says, "Daniel, one greatly beloved". He understood that God loved him and had watched over him all those seventy years and he knew that the time of release had come. Tribulation works endurance, and endurance experience and experience hope. Hope! Suddenly Daniel's heart would begin to beat. God is going to deliver and rebuild His city; God is going to bless His people again. You come through experiences and endure and find that at the end of the road is the experience of the love of God.

James speaks of the prophets; he says, "Take as an example, brethren, of suffering and having patience, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord". Now that word for patience is 'endurance' if you see the note in the Darby Bible. Think of how the prophets endured! Jeremiah prophesied for forty years and Isaiah for sixty. They endured! Jeremiah was the 'weeping prophet'. "Oh that I had never been born", he says. Think of what went through Jeremiah's soul. He looked at Jerusalem in his Lamentations after it had all been ruined and he wept over it. He speaks about her Nazarites that "were purer than snow" (Lamentations 4:7) and there they were blackened. There were bodies in the streets, the voice of mirth ceased, everything gone.

Jeremiah went through his life like that. He was patient because he knew that at the very end, after the nation to whom he had prophesied had turned aside and gone over the brink into captivity, God would bring them back. He had patience and he endured. There was one special moment in his life when God came to him. It says in chapter 31 "Jehovah has appeared from afar unto me". Just look at the picture at that moment. Jeremiah is in prison, enduring ten years imprisonment in the court of the guard. The city of Jerusalem is surrounded by the Assyrian army waiting to break in. Jeremiah says that they are coming in, will overthrow, will put their thrones at the gates of Jerusalem. He knew it was going to happen. Jeremiah had been seven years in prison out of the ten year imprisonment and the enemies were there and he says "Jehovah appeared from afar unto me". God came to Jeremiah in that dingy prison with no food, only the bread and water of affliction, and said unto him, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). Now think about that. God draws near to Jeremiah and He looks at all the sorrow, the hatefulness, the horrible carnage, and all the strife and hatred that was in the city at that moment and He says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee". God had not changed! God's love never changes. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love". Everlasting—as far back as you can go it is there; go forward as far as you can, it is there! We are enshrouded by divine love.

'Have patience', says James, 'the prophets have spoken to you in the name of the Lord. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the end of the Lord'. That is why I draw attention to this. God in His wonderful wisdom includes it on the pages of scripture for us to understand that while we may have to endure in the pathway the end of it is that you find God is compassionate and pitiful. Which of us cannot say, even in our limited experience, how compassionate God has been with us.

J.N. Darby, in his note, says, 'that a man who endures is a man who is patient, though under great trials, bears up, does not lose heart or courage'. In the same way that the polishing of precious stones brings out their brightness, so with us God uses trials and our endurance of them to deal with the defects and blemishes. So when we have to endure, let us remember that it is God's hand and He is removing the rubbish so that what is beautiful will shine out.

I remember Mr Darton, years ago, talking about the 'divine thermostat'. He said the temperature rises slowly and things get hotter and hotter and then suddenly it comes to a point when it cuts out. There is not one of us here today that has not had to cling on at some stage or other but the point came when God said 'That is enough!' He turned the captivity of Job. That is the divine thermostat cutting out.

Job lost everything he had. He lost his camels, his she-asses, his oxen, seven sons at a blow. Satan is allowed to touch his body and covers him with a grievous botch. His three friends commiserate with him and sat round him and never said a word for seven days. I should think that he was miserable! Never once did he say anything derogatory about God. "We have received good from God, why should we not receive evil?" In his misery and sorrow he had to endure all that talk for days. I do not know how long it went on and yet it has become scripture. I cannot explain these things but to see "the end of the Lord" is just what I want to emphasise.

God took everything away yet Job still remained firm in his integrity in his heart towards God. How wonderful to have such confidence in God that he rests in Him whatever His hand does.

So we have "seen the end of the Lord". The hymn puts it:-

*'Clearer than ever shall we see
The grace which God our Saviour showed,
The love that led so faithfully
Along the pathless desert road.'*

God shows us the end of Job in the scriptures so that we can see that God is wonderfully compassionate, pitiful, cares for us, loves us, never chastens needlessly, and finally blesses abundantly. It is always with a view that what is precious should be saved (the dross should be lost) and that it should shine for His pleasure and glory. Remember that through the times of endurance and afterwards you will learn the heart of the God who has taken us up.

May we all be blessed and encouraged for His name's sake.

Philip Robinson

An address at Belfast 20th November 1993.

LOVE'S DWELLING PLACE

Ephesians 1:1-14

In the full rays of love divine
Our souls would rest and ever stay,
Where God's blest heart doth ever shine,
In one eternal blissful day.

Untouched by care and unannoyed
By all the petty strifes of men;
Believing we are overjoyed,
And heed not, why — nor, where — nor, when.

Upon Thy bosom, holy Lord,
Our souls recline in perfect rest;
The Father and Thyself adored—
With love's full portion, ever blest.

Joseph Pellatt
26th October, 1912.

“REJOICE WITH ME FOR I HAVE FOUND MY SHEEP”

Luke 15:1-7

Surrounded by sinners the Saviour stood,
The centre of that strange throng;
And He told of the love of the blessed God,
In the gift of his only Son,
That sinners guilty and lost might come
And share in the joys of His Father's home.

But the Scribes and Pharisees murmuring said,
In tones of upbraiding scorn,
He sinners receives and He eateth bread
With those who are vile and forlorn.
And the Spirit their censure has written down,
The sinners title, the Saviour's crown.

So He told of the Shepherd and the sheep,
And of one that was lost and gone,
Neglected and starved and benumbed with sleep,
And He longed to bring it home;
So He turned away from the "ninety-and-nine"
Determined His poor lost sheep to find.

And now as He finds the wand'ring one—
He raises it far above,
And He bears it back to His Father's home
In the strength of His mighty love.
And now His heart rejoices alway,
As on He goes in His homeward way.

And then as He enters those courts of light,
His Father's house so fair—
He calls those heavenly hosts so bright,
In the joy of His love to share.
'Rejoice with Me, for at infinite cost,
I have found My sheep which once was lost.'

And thus there is joy in heaven above,
O'er one poor sinner here,
Who, won by the story of God's own love—
Sheds a penitential tear.
'Tis the joy of God! 'tis His own delight,
Filling those courts of love and light.

Joseph Pellatt

FEET WASHING

John 13:1-17

And does He stoop to wash my feet,
To make His own disciples meet
 With Him to have a part?
Yes, from the glory He doth bend,
And by His Spirit, condescend
 To cleanse my ways and heart.

The water of the Word He takes,
Applies it freely, and thus makes
 My ways from evil free.
Defilement thus He doth remove;
All that would hinder His pure love
 From flowing out to me.

Shall I from Thee, Lord, turn away,
Thy presence leave, in evil stray,
 And thus my feet defile?
Thus lose my part with Thee above,
And grieve and disappoint Thy love,
 During this "little while"?

Lord, take my feet and let them be
In Thine own hands, 'till I shall see
 Thy face in glory bright.
Washed thus by Thee, my soul restored,
No more I'll grieve Thee, gracious Lord,
 But walk with Thee in white.

Joseph Pellatt

OUR HOPE

It may be ere another day,
His shout will call us hence away,
 And we shall see the Lord;
That face once marred all bright will be,
The travail of His soul He'll see,
 By all His own adored.

Then His own image we shall bear,
As we surround Him in the air,
 The trophies of His love;
The love that brought Him down to die,
Love that must have us all on high
 With Him to dwell above.

For Him we would in patience wait,
With ear attuned at wisdom's gate
 To hear His well known voice;
Speaking of love beyond all thought,
The Father's love to us now brought,
 Where He and we rejoice.

But soon His joy will know no bound,
That voice of holy song will sound
 Through heaven and earth abroad,
The universe of bliss will come
And righteousness shall find its home,
 Where dwells the living God.

Joseph Pellatt
11th October 1907.

A LETTER FROM GHANA

Readers of "Living Water" will be interested in the extracts from a letter given below, which shows one way in which the Lord is pleased to bless the distribution of the magazine.

As the writer is a former muslim the name has been withheld so as not to jeopardise the testimony he is able to render in his own country.

Since receiving this letter a number of other books have been sent to the Believer's Library Service with the prayer that this may be used of the Lord to reach others, believers, muslims, and perhaps even some pagans.

A recent report in "The Times" stated that the religious affiliation in Ghana is 42% christian, 12% moslem, and the rest various pagan practices such as animism. Other letters from Ghana have showed that through the preaching of the gospel there is a true turning to God even from paganism. (Ed.)

Dear one in Christ,

I borrowed your magazine called "Living Water" from the library and read it and I have become born again. I have read it from cover to cover.

I am a moslem. Since I started reading "Living Water" from the library my life has changed. I began to see that I was lost and if I died I would go to hell. I did not want to go to hell. I began to tell other moslems that perhaps we were in the wrong religion.

I bowed down my head and prayed for forgiveness. I am now a christian. Please I am sharing the gospel with some moslems in my moslem school. About 20 of them are interested.

Thank you for sending the "Living Water" magazine to the Believer's Library Service.

I have talked to my family and they are reading the Bible for the first time. I am praying for them. They are moslems. My father often reads "Living Water" when I collect it from the library.

I remain,

Yours in Christ,

A WORD OF WARNING - 4

THE DANGER OF FORMALITY

Ephesians 4:15-16

Formality is damaging, bringing with it spiritual paralysis. In the beginning of the Acts we find a man lying at the very gate of the temple, and yet he could not go in. Divine power comes in and that man's feet and ankle bones are made strong. He stands and walks and leaps and enters with them into the temple. So, in contrast to all the deadness of formality, the passage in Ephesians 4 presents a living organism, holding the truth in love. This living system is growing up to Christ in all things, who is the head. Then it speaks of joints of supply. Every person, brother or sister, young or old can be a joint of supply from a known source—from Christ in glory. You may say that we have no gift in our locality, but have we any joints of supply? Are the members livingly working?

We are told in verse 16 where we read, "according to the working in its measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the body to its self-building up in love". The increase of the body is what we want to have before us—living buoyant conditions over against formality, which may even come into our gatherings because we know the correct phraseology, and the way in which to express ourselves at any given time. In all this there may be a lack of dependance on the Spirit, a lack of holding the truth in love, a lack of making way for one another, to function as a joint of supply from Christ in glory. Yet dependance on the Holy Spirit is the only way in which we can overcome formality, and bring about self-building up in love, which will ensure a right representation of God, and a full response to Himself.

A. P. C. Lawrence

This is the final extract from an address at Coatbridge in 1958.

THE GLAD TIDINGS OF PEACE

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that announceth glad tidings, that publisheth peace; that announceth glad tidings of good, that publisheth salvation...” (Isaiah 52:7)

In Isaiah chapter 52 we find the prophet bursting out in a note of joy as he was able to review prophetically the walk of Jesus: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that announceth glad tidings, that publisheth peace”. Let me make a practical suggestion to you; if you have never considered it before, I would encourage you to follow those beautiful steps. If there is one section of the scripture that would bow our hearts in holy adoration and admiration for our Lord Jesus, it is the gospels.

Read the four gospels carefully and prayerfully; follow in detail the perfect pathway of that blessed Man as He trod this world here for God and for His pleasure. He brought “glad tidings of good” to men. In Acts we are told that He “went through all quarters doing good, and healing all that were under the power of the devil; because God was with him”. Every footstep of His was a delight to heaven, so delightful that heaven itself opened upon Him and the Father’s voice was heard saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight”.

Have you ever admired the footsteps of Jesus? Have you ever taken the gospels and let your soul enjoy the preciousness, the fullness and the tenderness of the grace that marked Him in every footstep? The greatest study that our minds could be engaged with is that of the beauty of Christ. There is nothing like it in the whole universe. There are all kinds of subjects open to us to study but if you want a theme to study that will thrill your heart, fashion your life, and be an incentive for you to follow in His steps, study prayerfully and carefully, as before God, the footsteps of Jesus as lowly Man here. There is no record on earth to be compared with it. If we are ignorant of it we have missed the purest and best engagement for our minds.

Let the voice of the Holy Spirit of God speak to you through the pages of the gospels of the beauty, grace, preciousness and lowliness of Jesus, the One who came here bringing “glad tidings of good”. As you listen your soul will be moved and will say, ‘Is it not possible for me in my measure to be a bearer of good tidings?’ There is a scriptural answer to that question. Are we to look upon

Jesus and His pathway here in relation to His perfect service, to His character as the bearer of glad tidings, as that which cannot be followed? The answer is this: "How beautiful the feet of **them** that announce glad tidings of peace, of **them** that announce glad tidings of good things" (Romans 10:15). Notice the alteration in one word, for it says, "How beautiful the feet of **them**". What perfection there is in scripture, for the Spirit of God, quoting Old Testament scripture which has direct and special reference to Jesus, alters it into the plural. We are profoundly thankful for that alteration. There is a divine touch of skill in that, for it brings home to our hearts that, although not in the same measure, yet in the same character, and after the same order, those who are left here to follow our blessed Lord Jesus have the wonderful privilege of being preachers of the gospel of peace. As bearers of glad tidings of good things, we may be pursuing the same line of blessed service that He fulfilled so perfectly.

The Lord would encourage us to be preachers of the gospel of peace. Perhaps some would ask, 'How can we be preachers?' It is well to ask that question, for the world around, those in your school, or work, or home, those you come into contact with, are watching you daily to see whether your profession of christianity is real. They will form their conclusion as a result of your life. You are preaching by your life, by your lips, by the spirit that marks you. You are preaching thus to those around you.

Are you telling them that the gospel is a splendid reality, great enough to make you happy without all the amusements of the world that those around you cannot do without, great enough to bring your feet into a holy, happy path where you find that which makes your life worth living? Or are you preaching to them that christianity is only a profession, that there is not anything real enough in it to make you satisfied without having to tap the same polluted waters of which they are drinking?

May we be awakened to the seriousness of this, that while on the one hand there is open to us the grand privilege of being bearers of glad tidings, there is also the possibility of giving a false character to christianity.

May the Lord bless us in these things, for His name's sake.

F. S. Marsh

Extracted from an address.

INWARD POWER

Hebrews 11: 21
1 Chronicles 28: 2
29: 10-14;
Revelation 1: 9-11;
Ephesians 3: 14-21

I would like to say a few words about inward power. It is a thought that runs through the four passages of scripture we have read. Jacob at the end of his life is shown as a worshipper. Jacob is the only person in Hebrews 11 said to be a worshipper. That is how Jacob ends. I read of David; it says of him that "he died in a good old age, full of days" (1 Chronicles 29: 28), yet here, where we read, he "stood upon his feet" and reaches the highest note of praise in the Old Testament. I have read of John in the Island of Patmos and it says of him that he "became in the Spirit on the Lord's day". Then Paul shows the height of it: "strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man". That is inward power.

Inward power is a wonderful thing. When you think of the world and the nations at large, they are governed by outward power, outward show, but very little inward power; that is a different thing. You see outward power when they came to take the Lord Jesus as recorded in John 18; they came, a band, the officers of the chief priest, Judas, lanterns, torches, staves, and the chiliarch—five hundred or a thousand men at his disposal; they came to take one man. There was outward power on the one hand and on the other hand, in one Man, the Lord Jesus, there was inward power. He said: "Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus the the Nazaræan. Jesus says to them, I am he", and they go backwards (John 18: 4-6). That is inward power. He continues, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go away" (verse 8). That is His solicitude for His own. Inward power was seen supremely and perfectly in Him. It stands in contrast to the outward show and power that belonged to the band who came to take Him.

Inward power has been seen right through the course of the testimony. We find it in Stephen, one man standing alone, none being "able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke" (Acts 6:10). Oh to have a touch of inward power in our souls!

I like to think of the history of these persons as recorded in Hebrews. It is good to go over their histories, recorded for us in the Bible, some of them in much detail such as that of Jacob. We could have begun with Abraham. Abraham was a man of whom it is said in Romans 4 that he strengthened himself (verse 20)

and the footnote says inwardly. His faith strengthened him inwardly. He knew full well the age of his body; he knew the age of Sarah but his faith strengthened him inwardly to lay hold without a doubt on the promises and that what God had proposed He was able to perform. But then I thought Jacob was more suitable to such as you and me. We may not perhaps measure up to Abraham but when you think of Jacob and the detail of his life and the discipline that he went through, you say, 'Well, there is a little hope for you and me'. Jacob was a disciplined man; he had four wives, twelve sons, and a wayward daughter. Jacob had three things apart from his business through which God had scope to discipline him.

Right from before the time Jacob is born he is mentioned as a man with inborn energy: he takes his brother by the heel in the womb. He is a supplanter. It speaks to us of how he instinctively realises that the first man has to go; Esau has to go. Esau is the man who has no appreciation whatever of the things of God, a profane person. When all the world comes into blessing in a day to come, Edom, the descendants of Esau, are left out of it. I would say to everyone here, 'Do not miss the blessing! Do not miss the birthright!' The birthright is available to all men everywhere and Jacob appreciated the birthright. In type, he appreciated Christ. Christ is the birthright of every man. Alas, many despise Him. They want the blessing, but despise the birthright, and so miss it. Jacob before he is born has vigour; he took his brother by the heel. He realises that the first man must go.

As you read Jacob's history you find landmarks that show something of the power that marked him. On one occasion when he wanted to placate his brother Esau by all the things that he sent beforehand, he is left alone and he wrestles with God. He wrestles with God and he prevails; that is what the prophet said. He did not lose—marvellous thing. He wrestled with God and God touched the hollow of his thigh; he became lame from that moment but it was a landmark in his history. There was power with Jacob; he says, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me" (Genesis 32: 26). It was a grand moment in Jacob's history when he wrestled with God and prevailed.

We get little touches, in remote passages of scripture, that shed a little light on the history of the men of faith. In regard of Jacob it says that he went down into Syria "and for a wife he kept sheep" (Hosea 12: 12). But I like to think of the last 17 years of the life of Jacob, when we see the fruit of discipline coming to light, from the moment when, at one hundred and thirty years old, he goes down to Joseph. Jacob can come into the presence of Pharaoh and bless him and go out. What has often been said of Abraham and Melchisedek can be applied to Jacob and Pharaoh, that the lesser is blessed of the greater (Hebrews 7: 7).

Pharaoh would be the greatest ruler on the earth at that time, yet Jacob is able to bless him in all the dignity of the anointing. (Jacob was anointed; "touch not mine anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm" (Psalm 105: 15) belongs to Jacob.) He goes into the presence of Pharaoh with none of the features of courtly dignity. He is a lame, old shepherd, his features no doubt bearing the marks of the frost by night and the heat by day from looking after his flock, yet he blesses Pharaoh, going in and coming out in true greatness. Surely something of these things can mark us more and more.

Then for 17 years, until his death, he is in the care and company of Joseph, his beloved son. The fruit of discipline is coming to light. He can bless the sons of Joseph; he can intelligently guide his hands and put Ephraim before Manasseh, and it is irreversible. These men that we have read of today, each one of them I think made, in New Testament language, their calling and election sure. So Jacob at the end comes out a blesser and he finishes as a worshipper. Jacob goes out like the sun setting in its splendour and I would like my end to be like that.

I read of David. The Spirit of God has divided David's history into two parts, the things first and the things last, and the last things are greater than the first. The first things of David we are well acquainted with, his early history as a young man, his meeting the giant, being anointed in the midst of his brethren and securing a place for the ark. They belong to the first part of David's history but the last things are greater.

The last things of David pertain to the house of God. He buys the site, paying full money for it in shekels of gold (1 Chronicles 21). From that moment onwards all his energies, as an old man yet a strengthened one, are set towards the creation of the house which "must be exceeding great in fame and in beauty" (1 Chronicles 22: 5) for it was not to be built for man but for God. All David's energies, all he prepares abundantly before his death, all he set up in the way of the service of song and the singers and the head men were devoted to the house. Do not overlook these head men. There are many references to them, for example, in 1 Chronicles 23: 8, 11, 17, 20; 26: 12 and 27: 5. All are doubtless very important and we should understand them better; they lead up to headship seen in the way "King David stood up upon his feet" and addressed his people. A critic may say, 'Superfluous! you cannot stand on anything but your feet'. But it is not that at all. If David stands up upon his feet it means to say that he is not the decrepit old man that he is in 1 Kings 1: 1-20. David stood upon his feet, balanced, not tottering. He is solid, dignified and strengthened by God. As it says, "in thy hand it is to make all great and strong". God can do that. David

doubtless reached great heights when he speaks of God as “exalted as head above all”.

A prayer of an old brother comes to mind: ‘Lord, save us from spiritual decrepitude’. That is a good prayer for an old man. A good prayer for a young man is, “Lord open mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things written in thy law”.

In the passage read in Revelation we get “I John”. That is how he begins. John brings his name forward here. You do not get John mentioned by name in his gospel. There the references are oblique: you get the sons of Zebedee, and the disciple whom Jesus loved, but when John writes the Revelation he says, “I John, your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience, in Jesus”. That is a settled thing— “in Jesus”. The order of the day was tribulation, patience, kingdom, testimony. Revelation is full of the testimony. “The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 19: 10). The two witnesses we read of in Revelation chapter 11:3 fulfil their testimony. Let us be found in testimony.

Things were very hostile to John. We are not told anything about the emperor who banished him. That is like Paul, when in prison he describes himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Nothing is said about the emperor. A historian would have gone into length about that; the Spirit of God bypasses it. We are not told what John did in Patmos. It is a barren island and he probably worked in the lead mines. John was there for the testimony and the word of God and to make known the things that he sees and to pass them on to these seven assemblies.

We are told that “he became in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”. That is his own act. That is not the gift or the reception of the Spirit, but it is his own act in becoming in the Spirit, in the power of the Spirit, on the Lord’s day in view of the rigorous conditions that he had to face and the revelations that were made unto him.

John in his writings gives us the inward side. Luke in his writings, and Paul in Corinthians, give us the outward side. Both go along together; we must keep them together. In Luke the coming of the Spirit is presented as clothing the disciples with power from on high; that is outward—clothing is outward. John presents what is inward, “He breathed into them, and says to them, receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20: 22). That is inward power and John’s writing is altogether in keeping with that. John became in Spirit on the Lord’s day. On the one hand for the testimony he is able to make known the things that he heard and saw; on the other he sees a door opened in heaven and can have entrance on the Lord’s

day. May we know something about it tomorrow, and not only tomorrow, but in the course of the testimony. The power of the Spirit is irresistible.

Ephesians 3 would be the climax. You could not really take up a thought like this without finishing in Ephesians 3—not that I can say much about it. What we have read is a reference to eternity. The end in view is glory to God “in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages”. There will be that eternal yield to God in the assembly by Christ Jesus to all eternity.

We sometimes sing:

*‘How may we rise to Thy vast thoughts,
Or apprehend Thy sovereign will—
The grace that sets our souls on high,
And love that brings us nearer still?’*

How can we enter upon it? How can we answer to it? There is only one answer and that is to be strengthened with might by the Father’s Spirit in the inner man (verse 16).

This is one of Paul’s prayers; he speaks of the love of the Christ, which passes all knowledge. This is the love of Christ in its highest setting. We read of the love of Christ in Romans 8, and find that nothing can separate us from it. In Corinthians we read of the constraining power of the love of Christ. But the love of the Christ in its highest setting is found in Ephesians 3. You may say, ‘it is beyond us’. Yet believers found together in assembly can experience the touch of inward power, the strengthening of the Father’s Spirit in the inner man in order that we might apprehend these great things and find ourselves responsive to them.

May these thoughts stimulate every one of us. There is much more of course; we cannot exhaust these scriptures; we cannot exhaust any scripture. Yet you feel you touch the climax, the great consummation of God’s eternal thoughts secured in Christ and the church, so that there is an eternal yield to God the Father. We are strengthened inwardly by the Father’s Spirit in order to enter upon it and feel part of it, responsively answering to the love of God the Father and to Christ and to the blessed Spirit too.

J. H. Rawstrone

Shortened version of an address at Bromley, 3rd September, 1983