

Living Water — Issue No. 25

This issue sees the start of two new series of articles. As a young believer I found C.A.Coates' booklet 'Daily' of very great help. "Daily Searching of the Scriptures" is the first of a series of extracts from this booklet. I hope that they will be of as much use to the readers of "*Living Water*" as they were to me.

At the end of the magazine is the first part of a series by J.N.Darby on things that he had learned from Scripture.

The preaching by Dr Wolston which continues the occasional series of preachings from the Old Testament is rather longer than usual for this magazine, but I hope that you will agree it is worth re-printing.

Ed.

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THREE WORDS AT A BURIAL

PARTAKERS OF THE HEAVENLY CALLING

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus...”
(Hebrews 3:1)

I can see today that many count it a privilege to gather together for the last service we can render to our brother in the Lord, whom many of us loved on that account. There are those here who loved him in a special way as a relative and surely the affections of everyone here go out to those who feel the loss in that particular way. But I feel impressed about this verse from the Bible in relation to our brother whom we have known, many of us, over a good few years and I wanted to speak particularly about the proper place of every christian as being partakers of the heavenly calling.

Christians have a calling that goes beyond life here. It is of the greatest importance that we should have security for our souls while we are here in this world. Problems are constantly arising and we do need to call on God for help about them, but a distinguishing mark of the true christian is that his or her horizon is not limited by this life. There is a prospect before the christian that stretches far beyond these days into what the Bible calls eternity. None of us can say much about eternity and the Bible does not say much either, but it does tell us that there is eternity and it does speak about being for ever with the Lord, for ever with the Lord Jesus Christ. I say with confidence that that is where our brother, whose body we are here to bury, is in spirit now—with the Lord.

I thought of this verse particularly because in recent years I have come to appreciate, as I expect others have, the enjoyment that our dear brother had in the things of the Lord. It was no duty for him to be a christian or to come to meetings of those that love the Lord; it was clearly his joy to be there. If we were reading the scriptures he had something living and fresh to say about them. These are the features of everyone who loves the Lord and has their eye not just on time but on eternity. That is what we are all called to be. Christians are called upon to be “partakers of the heavenly calling”.

It is wonderful that God has called us for this, to belong to Him, not just for time but for eternity, and to have our heart set, as the apostle said, on things above, “where the Christ is”, where the Lord Jesus is now.

That brings me to the second half of the verse, because there is a word to all of us here, to consider Jesus. Our brother and all of us who love the Lord here would be glad to use this time to consider Jesus, to have our eye and affections freshly turned towards Him. The Lord is spoken of here in two remarkable ways that I think have a bearing on this time together; it speaks of Him as "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession". The confession means our faith, the faith that christians profess; that is our confession. The word 'apostle' tells us that the Lord Jesus came out from God into the world. We are told about that in John 13: "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came out from God and was going to God" (v.3). He came out from God as the Apostle, the One with the word of God. You will find it in the scriptures, Jesus constantly ministered the word of God, what everyone of us needs. But the Lord not only lived here, He died here. Our brother now with Christ has died in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who loved him and gave Himself for him. That is what many of us, perhaps all of us here, would say; "the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

The Apostle came out from God; I think the High Priest goes in to God. That is what it says in John 13, that Jesus was going to God. If you read on a bit in the epistle to the Hebrews you will find why men and women need a High Priest. They need someone who will take up their case in the presence of God. I am not now speaking about our sins. Thank God, they were taken up on the cross of Christ and, for everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, as the One who bore our sins in His body on the tree, that is a settled question. But in times particularly of sorrow, worry, distress and concern, all those things that crowd in on us—they may well be crowding in specially on some here today; they may be crowding in at different times on all of us—we need a High Priest, One who cares about us and takes up our case in the presence of God.

That is what Jesus does; He is the One who takes up His people's case in the presence of God Himself. We can say with assurance that the witness and service of our Lord Jesus Christ on high is thoroughly acceptable in the presence of God. Because He is accepted there everyone that loves Him is accepted there as well. I just therefore venture to say to those who may be feeling the loss of a brother, a father, a relative, in a particular way, consider the High Priest of our confession, Jesus, the One who takes up our case, the One who is to be relied upon when we are in trouble. May His Name be blessed among us. It would be the desire of our brother, the desire of all of us who love the Lord, that His Name should be magnified.

David Burr

ONE WHO WILL NEVER LEAVE US

“...for he has said, I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee.”
(Hebrews 13:5)

‘The past is settled; the future is assured; the present is the problem’. Those were the words of our brother. The past was settled; he knew God could not bring any charge against him, because he had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and the blood of Jesus Christ had cleansed him from every sin; therefore he knew that God could bring no charge against him. The future was assured; he knew that the Saviour, Jesus in whom he trusted, had secured his future, a future of eternal peace and holy joy. He knew that the Lord Jesus had prepared a place for him in the Father’s house. He saw something of the glory of the eternal day when the glory of Jesus will fill the heavens and the earth and he looked forward to it.

Yet our brother could say ‘The present is the problem’, and I think many of us understand what he meant. In this mortal body we suffer from many things, from disease, accidents and the ageing process. Some know what it is to be rarely out of pain. There are the frustrations of not being physically able to do what we would like to do. There are cares and times of loneliness and pain. Then there are sorrows that we carry, personal sorrows, church sorrows; as we grow older they increase; the burden becomes heavier. But we have One who is always with us; we are never alone. This is not only a promise; it is a fact. Our brother proved the fact and each one of us is to prove the fact that “I will not leave thee or forsake thee.”

Jesus has broken the power of death; His tomb is empty. He is a glorious living Man available to each one of us. His invitation is: “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”. That is more than a promise; that is a glorious fact. I can witness to that; others in this room can witness to it as well. There is a Man who understands us better than any other man, a Man who can enter into our sorrows. He could weep with Mary at the tomb of Lazarus. He can bring comfort and strength to our souls such as no other one can. I am speaking of Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ, and I trust that every one in this room knows Him as their Lord, Saviour and Friend.

Roger Pons

ONE THAT IS FROM THE BEGINNING

“I have written to you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning.” (1 John 2:14)

“And he said to me, It is done. *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that thirsts of the fountain of water of life freely.*” (Revelation 21:6)

I have read these verses because I wanted to refer to the One who is from the beginning and because I know that the one whose body we bury today knew “him that is from the beginning”. When we are in the presence of death it is a forcible reminder that the things we enjoy day by day last only for a time, and we have to consider very carefully, before God, as to the beginning and the end. Mr K. knew well the One referred to here as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

I speak of these two scriptures today because when John presents to us the ‘beginning’ he is drawing our attention to God Himself, and God is love. His heart of love is extended to everybody here today. Mr K. knew what it was to find that love in God many years ago. He is similar to those to whom John wrote here; he was a father, one who had experience with God. Many here today, who have known our brother for many years, will have witnessed his committal to our Lord Jesus and his committal to God. One thing he knew as an anchor for his soul was God’s love for him. He knew the love that had looked upon him, found him, and blessed him. That is just what God would do for everybody in this little chapel, indeed everybody in the world. His love is towards us and He has in mind our blessing.

We are reminded in the presence of death that things are passing. Perhaps when we are younger we think that life just goes on and on and we do not give much thought to the fact that things are passing but this is a reminder to us, a witness today, that the things here are passing. What have you that you will take with you into eternity?

Then, when we turn to the passage read in the Revelation, we find someone there referred to as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and what we find in this chapter very distinctively is that God is love. If we look back a verse or two prior to where we read we find that the God of love will wipe away every tear. The God of love wants to bring you into a scene where there is no sorrow, no death, no pain. Our brother Mr. K. particularly in the last years of his life knew pain and weakness but he also knew the One who was able to take

care of him, the One who was there in the beginning and would be there to the end. God's love never fails; it did not fail our brother. The invitation we have right at the end of the Bible in the verse read is this, "I will give to him that thirsts of the fountain of the water of life freely". That is God's invitation which was given to Mr K. many many years ago. He accepted it and now it is offered to us for our acceptance also.

Keith Wickens

Three words given at a burial at Maidstone, July 1997.

BLESSING THE CUP

**"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of
the blood of the Christ?"**

1 Corinthians 10:16

No doubt, many believers, when they read these words, immediately turn their minds to the cup which we drink at the Lord's Supper. In one sense this is quite right, for no doubt this cup is the expression of it to us. But 1 Corinthians 10 has in mind the thought of fellowship throughout the whole week and this raises a challenge with each one of us. Can we and do we bless the cup on Monday morning or a Saturday night? Is the fellowship of God's Son, into which we have been called and to which we have committed ourselves a great and joyous matter to us, so that at all times we speak well of it.

When our colleagues at work or school talk of their activities and their frivolities in their vain attempt to find happiness and satisfaction in the world, do we wistfully cast our eyes back to the things of the world, or do we bless the cup, and tell them of the wonderful joys and satisfaction which we have found in the holy fellowship of God's Son? If we can, the Lord's Supper will have a new and fresh appeal to us every time we come together, not only to remember, but to meet the glorious Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He gave Himself for us, not only to deliver us from the present evil world, but to bring us into a place where spiritual and heavenly joys are to be found.

Lest there be any who find the claims of this wonderful fellowship irksome, and who do not find it in their hearts to bless the cup, let me draw your attention to verses 6 - 10 of 1 Corinthians 10. Here the apostle Paul raises five signposts as a warning to us.

Firstly, "be not lusters after evil things". When the soul neglects communion with Christ, the immediate tendency is to turn back to the things in which it formerly found its enjoyment. These may be seemingly harmless things, hobbies, sports and various pursuits, in which we found our life as away from God, and as such become evil things.

Secondly, "Neither be ye idolaters". Here the heart has found other interests and Christ has been displaced. The things of Christ have a secondary place. Third, "Neither let us commit fornication". We find companionship among unbelievers and unconverted persons, unholy links are formed and we become entangled in evil associations. Fourthly, "Neither let us tempt the Christ". We are now moving in a path of independency. We take risks, and take ourselves out of the hand of Christ, and move in courses where we know that He cannot support us.

Fifthly, "Neither murmur ye". We now live in 'Complaining Street'. We see many faults amongst the brethren. We lose our taste for spiritual food and oppose sound teaching, and are ready for the final step. Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

May we ever be kept near to Christ. Let us judge in its very inception anything that we are conscious of that is coming between our hearts and Christ. He is sufficient for us all the way through, and we need not go outside of Him for true joy and satisfaction. It says, "for they drank of a spiritual rock which followed them: (now the rock was the Christ;)"

Think of Christ following us, ever ready to minister that spiritual refreshment to sustain our souls, that living water that springs up to eternal life, giving us to taste the joys of heaven even when down here. May we all be preserved in an ever deepening sense of the love of God, the love of Christ, and the love of the Spirit so that we may be ready at all times to bless the cup.

Alex Dickson

“WITH BREAD HE STRENGTHENETH MAN’S HEART”

Psalm 104:15

Man, earthy of the earth, an-hungered feeds
On earth’s dark poison tree—
Wild gourds, and deadly roots, and bitter weeds:
And as his food is he.

And hungry souls there are, that find and eat
God’s manna day by day—
And glad they are, their life is fresh and sweet,
For as their food are they.

G. Ter Steegan (1697 - 1769)

THE TASK

**“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ”
(Philippians 3:7)**

To learn, and yet to learn, whilst life goes by,
So pass the student’s days;
And thus be great, and do great things, and die,
And lie embalmed with praise.

My work is but to lose and to forget,
Thus small despised to be;
All to unlearn—this task before me set;
Unlearn all else but Thee.

G. Ter Steegan (1697 - 1769)

THE GLORY SHINES BEFORE ME

The glory shines before me,
I cannot linger here;
Though clouds may darken o'er me,
The Father's house is near.
If in this barren wilderness
A little while I roam,
The glory shines before me;
I am not far from home.

The glory shines before me,
Beyond this vale of tears,
Beyond the floods o'erflowing,
Beyond the changing years.
I'm going to the better land,
By faith long since possessed,
The glory shines before me,
For here is not my rest.

The Lamb is there in glory;
The Lamb is there in light;
There shall be no more weeping,
And there is no more night.
The voice of Jesus calls me,
The race will soon be run,
The glory shines before me,
The prize will soon be won.

The glory shines before me,
I know that all is well;
The Father's care is o'er me,
His praises I would tell.
The love of Christ constrains me
His blood hath washed me white,
Where Jesus is in glory—
'Tis home, and love, and light.

Miss H. K. Burlingham

THE DAYS

There is a precious day,
In youth that day is ours,
When we should dedicate to God
Our life, with all its powers.

There is a gracious day,
When conscience speaks within,
'Tis now, for now the Spirit strives
Convincing us of sin.

There is a holy day
Of faith and hope and love,
It reaches through our christian life
On earth, to heaven above.

There is a solemn day,
When we must yield our breath
And live to die no more, or die
An everlasting death.

There is an awful day
Of judgment and decree.
Lord, be we all through Christ prepared,
That last of days to see.

There is a glorious day
Of sweet sabbathic rest:
O, may we its eternal length
Enjoy with all the blest!

James Montgomery (1771 - 1854)

THE TESTIMONY OF AN EXECUTED SOLDIER

In 1943, Fred, a soldier in his twenties, serving in North Africa, was found guilty of killing another soldier and sentenced to death. He had only a week to live. He had a young family back home in the UK which he would never see again. His name would not even appear on any war memorial because he had not lost his life in battle. Fred had never had much time for God and he had no hope in this life or the next.

In that last week of his life, in the mercy of God Fred was visited by a forces chaplain who told him that: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Fred's response was, 'I am a murderer, and God will have nothing to do with murderers'. The chaplain replied quoting, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out". Fred's response was immediate; 'Show me that in the book!'. The chaplain passed over his Bible, open at John 6:37; Fred took it, read the verse and then looked up and smiled. 'Yes, Padre,' he said, 'It is there.' The chaplain followed on by telling Fred that these were the words of the Lord Jesus Himself and that they could be trusted perfectly.

On that first day Fred faced up to his situation before God. Simply and sincerely he asked Christ to come into his heart, to forgive his sins, and to be his Saviour. The chaplain first showed him Hebrews 13:5: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee", then gave him a Bible and suggested that he should read through John's gospel.

From that moment Fred's life was changed. He read John's gospel three times in the rest of that week. The chaplain visited him each day and on one occasion Fred said, 'I am so glad that this happened to me. Not that I killed somebody—I shall always regret that, but I do not think that otherwise I would ever have found God as my Saviour and Friend'. On another visit Fred said, 'I can honestly say that I am looking forward to meeting God. I never thought that I would ever say that, but it is true'.

The change was noticed by others as well. The officer who had defended him at the Court Martial visited Fred towards the end of the week. He came away puzzled saying, 'Does he realise that he is going to die? He is more like a man going on leave!' Here was the living witness of true repentance and of unfeigned faith.

Fred was executed on the 23rd July 1943. He passed from death to life. He may have no other memorial, but his story comes to us as a living testimony of the gospel of Christ as God's power to salvation, to every one that believes.

*The basis of this story is an account prepared by the chaplain
who visited Fred during his last week.*

Ed.

SIX THINGS IN THE DAILY LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN - PART 1

Daily searching of the Scriptures

“But the brethren immediately sent away, in the night, Paul and Silas to Berea; who, being arrived, went away into the synagogue of the Jews. And these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, receiving the word with all readiness of mind, daily searching the scriptures if these things were so.” (Acts 17:10-11)

It is of great importance to the welfare of your soul that you should have, and cultivate, an appetite for the Word of God. But everything depends upon the spirit and attitude in which we approach the Scriptures. It is possible to study the Bible in schoolboy fashion, and to learn divinity just as people learn geology or botany. I do not want to encourage you to do that; there is already too much of it. We are not only told that the Bereans “searched the scriptures”, but we are told why they searched. They heard the preaching of Paul and Silas, and received “the word with all readiness of mind, daily searching the scriptures if these things were so”.

Wonderful things were brought to their ears, and they were not sceptical or indifferent; they received the word “with all readiness of mind”, and they searched the Scriptures because they had received the word of the apostles. They searched, not like the antiquary who pores over an old will with curiosity or scientific interest, but like the person who has been told, and who has received the report, that a great legacy is bequeathed to him in it. I thank God that many of you have received the report of the marvellous blessings of His grace, but I fear that some of you have not been sufficiently interested in them to search the Scriptures daily whether these things are so. The result is that you are not so stable as you ought to be and if you were challenged as to some of the blessings which you think you have received, you might not be able to give a very good “reason of the hope that is in you”.

There is often a carelessness amongst the children of God as to divine things which has no parallel in the ordinary affairs of life. If a man buys an estate he does not content himself with the bare word of the vendor; he will have the deeds searched with the utmost care to be quite sure the title is good. If a man has property left him in America and a detailed account of it is sent to him, you may be sure that he will read it carefully through, and that more than once. If I

were to go to some Bradford merchant and tell him that the sovereign had conferred upon him the honour of knighthood, he would insist on seeing the official document which would verify the statement. The more important a thing is, the more anxious people are to be sure about it, and I think if we got a right sense of the immensity of the very smallest bit of christian blessing, we should go to the Word of God as the Bereans did to make quite sure that those things were so.

I think where there is carelessness as to the Word of God it indicates that we have not a right sense in our hearts of the greatness of christian blessings, or they would become matters of more earnest and anxious inquiry. These things are so important—the issues at stake are so vital—that we should take nothing on trust, even if the speaker be an apostle.

I am often surprised that christians who have listened for years—apparently with interest and attention—to the ministry of the word know so little of divine things. They seem to enjoy the ministry, their faces are bright in the meetings, and yet when you come to talk to them you find that very little of it has got into their souls. I believe the secret is that they listen to what is said, but value it so little that they do not take the trouble of going to the Scriptures to verify it for themselves. Ministry has its own blessed and important place, but I do not believe that any ministry will be of permanent profit to our souls if it is not followed by searching of the Scriptures.

The young christian, Timothy, was exhorted by the apostle Paul to “give attendance to reading” and to “meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” 1 Timothy 4:13, 15. Further, as a servant he was to be a “workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”; and as a man of God he was to know that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:16, 17. In connection with this there is an exhortation in 2 Timothy 1:13 to which we might do well to take heed: “Hold fast the form of sound words”, or as a Darby Translation gives it—“Have an outline of sound words”. Timothy was to have in his mind an outline of the truth so that it was clear before him.

When I was at school we had sometimes to draw maps from memory, and very strange outlines used to be presented that would have puzzled anyone to tell what country they were intended to be like. Now suppose someone asked you to give an outline of the truth of christianity, could you do it? It is the will of God that we

should have a clear outline of the truth before our minds, and we cannot have this without searching the Scriptures. Otherwise our thoughts on divine things will be vague and indefinite, and we may become the prey of some plausible system of error, of which there are such endless varieties at the present day. If we desire to be tenacious of the truth, it is more than ever necessary that we should search the Scriptures "daily".

"Searching" gives the idea of a definite object being in view. A great deal of Bible reading is profitless because aimless. The reader is searching for nothing and finds it. I believe that we profit most when our souls are interested in certain subjects, and exercised before the Lord about them, and we turn to the Scriptures to search whether these things are so. There are surely many things with each one of us that we are more or less anxious to have divine light upon. Many of us do not know the doctrines of Scripture very clearly: questions arise as to practical details in our walk: surely each one of us has exercise as to his soul-experiences; and all these things should constrain us to search the Scriptures.

And remember it must be "daily"! I press upon every young christian here the necessity for the daily study of the Word of God. You cannot maintain a vacuum in your mind; if it is not occupied with divine things it will be with human or earthly things. The habit of searching the Scriptures grows upon you as you go on with it, but if you neglect the Word you soon lose a relish for it.

I have heard christians say something like this—I wish I could enjoy the Word of God more. When I read my Bible I do not get the blessing that some people do. I hear So-and-so say how his soul is refreshed by the Word, but I do not get it. I like to ask such persons, How often do you read the Word? Once a week? Or once a month? The one who reads his Bible most is the one who enjoys it most, and who turns to it with the greatest delight. On the other hand, if you neglect the Word to-day you will have less taste for it to-morrow, still less the day after, and so on until it becomes a dry book to you. You must make a point of it that you are in company with the Word of God every day. It is not a question of a great deal—you perhaps have not time for that—but it must be daily.

The great central figure of Scripture must be the object of your affections or you will read to little profit. In short, Christ must be before your heart, or you will miss the kernel of every truth in Scripture.

C. A. Coates

(In the next issue: 'Daily Watching'.)

GOLIATH'S FORTY DAYS

Despair and deliverance

1 Samuel 17 – 18:1-4

It is a wonderful moment in the soul's history when you really meet Christ and know Him as Deliverer and Saviour. There are three points in this striking scripture which I have read to-night. You get dismay, disdain, and deliverance. Now, dismay is what any man might feel as he looks at the condition of everything round about him, and inside him too. Disdain is the feeling the devil has towards you, for he knows his own power and your weakness. If you rightly understood the power of Satan, you would be far more dismayed than you are this minute. But I tell you what Satan thinks of you. He has the most profound disdain for you. Now I will tell you where blessing lies—in the knowledge of the One who is stronger than Satan, the great Deliverer, the Lord Jesus.

I admit this story of Goliath is but a figure, and I am not going to build a doctrine upon this picture, but it is one of those histories by which God brings before us that which illustrates the gospel. The point is this, that when man cannot deliver himself, and when the power of the enemy is too great for man, that is the moment when God steps in, in grace, to meet the weakest sinner that cares to taste that grace.

Now I know that a good many of us here to-night are converted, and a good many are not. I have not been preaching for forty years without knowing that in a large meeting like this, among a good many christians, there are always some that are not converted. There is one young man that I want specially to address this evening. You are not converted. May God convert you to-night. It is about time.

This scene before us is a picture of the effect of grace. Jonathan illustrates what I call a magnificent conversion, and a grand start. He illustrates a soul that wakes up to discover the personal beauty of Christ, and the love of His heart that brought Him into this scene, yea, into death, for our deliverance. When speaking of David to Saul his father, Jonathan says, "He did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine" (1 Samuel 19:5). Jesus did more than that. He laid down His life to save me, everlasting praise to His blessed name!

Unless you get into glory through the doorway of His death, you will never get in. You may by ten thousand roads go down to the dark dungeons of the damned through unbelief and carelessness. Your life is but a vapour, and it will be very soon gone, but there is only one way into God's presence for eternal blessing, and that is the doorway of death, the death of Him on whom death had no claim.

It strikes me that Jonathan was uncommonly glad when the end of the "forty days" of this scene came. I think forty days of anxiety were quite enough for Jonathan. I should be very glad to hear that you are anxious, for if you are, depend upon it, sooner or later, you will slip into peace, and joy, and God's salvation. What through? The discovery that Christ has loved you. Now mark this, my unsaved friend, you have not loved Him. If you are an unconverted sinner, you may be as religious as you like, but if you have not been converted, if you have not been broken down with the sense of your sins, do not deceive yourself—you do not love God. Why? Because there is no love in the heart of a natural man to God. But if you find out that God loves you, the next thing will be that you will be able to love Him. Do not try to love Him. That is a great mistake. If you learn that God has made His love known to you in the gift of His Son, and that the death of His Son has annulled death, closed the gates of hell for you, opened the door of heaven, called you in, and embraced you, then you cannot help loving Him. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). This effect I see in figure here. When this lovely story closes, what do we read? "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (chapter 18:1).

Now the valley of Elah is very interesting. Notice how boldly the giant went down into the valley, and demanded somebody to meet him there. The hosts of Israel are on the one side of the valley, and the Philistines on the other—a picture, I do not doubt, of that which is in this world. Satan has his forces and hosts, plenty of them. He is the foe of God and man. Let me tell you, friend, that you cannot cope with him. This giant Goliath is only a figure of a solemn truth in your history and mine.

The Philistines stand on one side, and the hosts of Israel on the other. Then out comes this champion. His height was six cubits and a span, "And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred

shekels of iron; and one bearing a shield went before him" (verses 5-7). I can quite understand how nobody cared to tackle him.

"And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me" (verse 8). That is a bold challenge. And what man could take it up? No man in Israel's army would come. Saul would not go out, and he was head and shoulders above the rest. And Jonathan would not go out. They were wise. "Choose you a man" was the word, but the chosen man was not there. Do you know where He came from? He came from God. God's man was no mere child of Adam. What child of Adam could overcome Satan? What person in this hall is a match for Satan? Friend, you are not his match, make no mistake.

You may say, 'I do not believe in Satan's power?' Very likely you do not. There was a time when I did not but one day God woke me up to a sense of my sins, and then I also got the sense of what a grip the devil had of me. Sinner, you are in the devil's power, with no sense of his grasp. Seek to escape and you will get your eyes opened. Satan does not put rough iron bracelets round the wrists of the sinner. They are there right enough, but he has put in a velvet lining so that you should not feel them. Very likely, my young friend, you have now got the bit in your teeth, and are going your own way. You are on for a fling. Just so, and the devil will help you. He will give you every encouragement Tell me, will he help you heavenward? No, my friend. I am well aware that you do not believe in him. But if you do not believe the gospel, and you do not believe in the power of Satan, you confirm the truth of Scripture. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils" (Luke 11:21, 22). Who is the strong man? Satan. And what are his goods? Sinners! What is his palace? The world. You are his goods. You do not see the label, but I see it. The label is burned deep in your soul. He knows it, and God knows it. God knew it, hence He sent His Son to be a Deliverer.

There is such a thing nowadays as "hidden gospel". Listen: "But if our gospel be hid, It is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4). The god of this world is the devil. Do you know what would happen if the

light of the gospel shone into your heart tonight? It would make a new man of you. I quite admit it has shone, but then you cannot see it, because you still have the shutters up. A blind man says he does not see the sun. Does that prove that no sun shines? Oh, no. Your blindness and indifference to the gospel is the most cogent proof possible that the devil has blinded you. You are hand-cuffed, but insensible to the sad fact.

Now, I was just like you once. And what has brought me where I am? Grace, sovereign grace. I owe nothing to the devil, and we are no friends. He would break my neck if he could. But he will not do that till my work is done. Friend, as you hear of Christ, receive Him. You may never get another opportunity. The deceitfulness of sin, and the power of the world, are Satan's two great motors in getting sinners to go on as they are until it be too late. Tell me this, is your heart happy? You have to meet God. Eternity is before you. You are a sinner. Sin is lying on you, and the wages of sin lie before you. You cannot escape death. You say, 'I will live as long as I can'. I know that. But if I were to tell you that you would certainly die before six in the morning, how would you like that? Death is the wages of sin, and you cannot escape it save by the intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ. How cheering are the tidings that God has stepped in and given His blessed Son to die for the sins of sinners.

Look at our picture again. "When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid" (verse 11). I think they were afraid and dismayed because they felt it was impossible for them to cope with such a foe. They are dismayed and in a condition of deep anxiety. No deliverer appears till they have a true and deep sense of their feebleness. Then is the moment for God to interfere. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). Yes, it is just then that the gospel comes out.

"And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren ... and look how thy brethren fare" (verse 17,18). You have here in figure that which is so beautifully stated by the apostle John: "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). When did the Lord Jesus Christ come into this world? Not until it was manifestly proved that man could not save himself. It was after thousands of years of sin, folly, and evil of man, that in due time Christ came. Who suggested to God to send His blessed Son? Nobody. It was His own thought. Ah, my friend, the gospel is a

wonderful thing. No writer of fiction ever produced, or could produce, a tale anything like the grandeur of the story of the gospel. Who would have thought that God would give His Son to die for a world that had sinned? There was a time when such a thought was obnoxious to me.

I knew the Lord was holy, and I was unholy; I knew He had claims upon me and I could not meet them. And the natural mind is enmity against God. Sin has put us at a distance from God. There is guilt on the conscience, sins and defilement on the soul and the sense that we are not fit for God. There is a drawing back from God, and then there is an interpreting of the heart of God by the thoughts of our own hearts. People in sin think God does not love them. It is an immense mistake. He loves the sinner, while He hates his sins. "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" (John 3:16). And what is the world? It is made up of people who do not love God. What, then, is the real church made up of? People who love God.

It is a wonderful thing when a man learns that God loves him. Get hold of the wondrous fact that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. The Son of the Father came into this world to make God known, and as you follow Him through His life, wherever you trace Him you see God. See Him full of compassion for the widow who has lost her only son and raising him from the dead (Luke 7:11-15). See Him going at the behest of an anxious father, when He raises Jairus' daughter from the dead. He was God manifest in the flesh. Follow Him to the fourth of John, where He meets a poor woman all alone. Her sin had made her solitary. There is nothing like sin to drive people into solitude. Jesus gets her confidence. When she says at length, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things", He replies, "I that speak unto thee am he" (verse 25, 26). God was manifest in the flesh. You will never know God apart from Jesus, but if you see Jesus, the Son of the Father, you will get the knowledge of His grace.

Let us now observe David as he comes to Israel's camp. He notices the state of misery and despair on every hand. And now once more the giant comes and renews his challenge and David not only hears, but he sees. He heard him, but he saw something else. "And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid" (verse 24). They had universally the sense that they could not meet him.

And now, my dear friend, have you the sense that you cannot meet Satan? He has overcome every man but One, the Man who, in lowly grace, came uncalled and unwanted into this scene. Jesus met the devil in the wilderness first of all, and refusing his temptations, morally overcame him; then He met him in the garden of Gethsemane, and again was the victor; then on the cross He bore Satan's attack and conquered, going by the pathway of death that "through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14, 15).

Arrived on the scene of conflict, David makes the front. "And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David." Do you know who Eliab is? He is the type of the self-righteous sinner that has come into this hall, and who does not want a Saviour. You say, I do not believe that I am lost. You will not be saved then. See what Eliab says here. "Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle" (verse 28). I think that is mighty fine! "To see the battle". There was no battle to see, no one could take on the challenge. So also is it with you and Satan to-day. You need a Deliverer. You are nothing but a weak, polluted sinner, only fit for hell, and that is where you will spend eternity if you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is very strong language, you say. Yes, strong but true nevertheless. Hell is hell, and heaven is heaven. I have escaped the one and know the joy of the other, so I want you to get on the road to heaven if I can persuade you to take that step.

The Son of God come down to save and, thank God, He has saved me. He came down to wash away all my sins, and He has done it. He came to fill my heart with joy and gladness, and He has done it. What He has done for me, let Him do for you. I think David's answer to Eliab here is beautiful: "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" (verse 29). Friend, listen! From the glory tonight the Saviour says to you, "Is there not a cause?" Indeed there is, for if Christ do not intervene there is no salvation for any. The cause was manifest; the foe was too strong for us. Love brought Christ down. And then upon the cross sin was laid on Him, and He bore sins that He might blot them out, and deliver and bring to God every one that trusts Him. Could Israel meet their enemy? They could not. Can you meet Satan's power? You cannot, and further, you are unfit to meet God. If you die in your sins, you will be buried in them, and you will be raised in them, and you will pass to the great white throne in them, and from

thence you will pass into the lake of fire in them. Mark this, the man that does not part company with his sins in time will not part with them in eternity. As the hymn puts it:

*'There is no pardon in the tomb,
And brief is mercy's day.'*

Now, notice the way David wrought deliverance for Israel. He gathered from the brook five smooth stones. What good could they be against such a giant? I think when Saul saw him do that, he regarded it as folly. And do you know what some people in our day have said? 'I cannot accept the story of the cross. I do not believe that I can be saved by the dying agonies and the atoning sufferings of a Man upon that tree.' The apostle Paul says, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). I know that I seem to some of you in this day of incredulity and infidelity to be indeed foolish, but I am quite prepared to be counted a fool for Christ's sake. But please observe that what you count 'foolishness' is 'salvation' to me for the preaching of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:21). That is the meaning of the five smooth stones; what looked the essence of feebleness was the power of God.

The giant curses David, and treats him with disdain. The latter goes out with only stone and sling, he slings that stone, and it enters the giant's forehead. All thought it was impossible. Yes, but the fact is this, what is impossible with man is possible with God. That which seems weakness with man is power with God. What could be weaker than a stripling and a stone? I can tell you of something weaker. A babe lying in a manger. I read, "And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12). There are two signs God gives us in Scripture. A babe lying in a manger. That was the sign given to the shepherds. But there is yet another deeper sign of weakness—a dead man. The Lord Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish (RV.), so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:39, 40). The expression of absolute weakness is a man in death. Do you know how I am saved? Through a Man in death. He was rejected by everybody, betrayed by a false friend, and denied by a true one, forsaken by everybody, and at length forsaken by God, and on the cross "crucified through weakness" (2 Corinthians 13:4). But that cross is God's power unto

salvation. There is nothing will meet and deliver man but the cross. It is God's way of meeting man where he is, as a sinner in his sins. "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men"(1 Corinthians 1:25).

When the giant falls, "David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword... and cut off his head therewith" (verse 51). I think Jonathan took a good long breath when he saw the giant's head come off. I see five points in Jonathan's history:

- when David came into the camp Jonathan was trembling;
- when he saw David go forth, for he had heard what David had said, he was hopeful;
- when the giant's head came off, he could say, 'Thank God it is all done, I am clear of that enemy now'; He was delivered;
- next he was enriched; and,
- lastly he became devoted.

It is a great thing to see that by Christ's death on the cross the power of Satan was broken. By His death Christ met the claims of God on man. What is the next thing? A risen Saviour, an empty tomb, and then a rolled-away stone. The stone was not rolled away to let the Saviour out but to let you and me look in, and see the proofs of His victory over death and Satan. Thereafter the Lord went up on high triumphant.

Christ's death has saved millions. If you are wise you will say, By the grace of God I will have Him tonight as my own. You may well have Him, boast in Him, and yield all to Him, for He is worthy. If you are wise you will get hold of this, that a Man, on whom death had no claim, has gone into death, that He has come up out of the grave, triumphant over Satan, and that He has left unsettled no question as to the sins of those who trust in Him. There was no sin on Him when He went on the cross. Then "the sins of many" were laid on Him while on the cross, but there was no sin on Him when He came down from the cross. There He atoned for and put them all away, and as a consequence He has gone into death and annulled it.

Did you ever ponder this verse? "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through

death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). Do you know why you and I die? Because we are the children of a fallen man. Do you know why Christ became a Man? That He might die. Death had no claim on Him, for "he did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22). He "knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21), and "in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). As to this, testimony is abundant from every side, divine, satanic, and human. God searched Him and found "nothing" in Him (Psalm 17:3). He Himself said, "The prince of this world (Satan) cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). Then the dying thief said, "This Man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:41). The Lord Jesus was absolutely perfect.

Having met Satan in the stronghold of death—the very citadel of the king of terrors—He has annulled his power and risen from the dead. I think I can understand now why He says to John, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:18). He, so to speak, says to John, 'I have been down exactly where you were, I have gone into the death you ought to have died, I have met the one who had the power of death, I have plucked the keys from his girdle, and wrenched the sceptre from his hand; he is a defeated foe, and I am a risen, victorious Saviour'. That is the One I know.

I repeat, I believe Jonathan drew a good long breath when he saw the giant's head roll off. Nor am I at all surprised to read, "And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted" (verse 52). I sometimes wonder how people when they hear and get hold of God's delivering gospel do not shout, 'Hallelujah, I am saved to-night'. I should rejoice to hear you say it. You get the enjoyed sense of the deliverance of Christ, and it will mightily move you. The fact is, that people are very proper nowadays, and are little moved by the gospel. They forget that a great many are going into hell with the utmost propriety. They will be terribly moved when they stand before the great white throne. The men of Israel and Judah were moved. They spoiled the tents of the Philistines, and they were enriched. Among them Jonathan was enriched. At first anxious, then hopeful, then delivered, now he is enriched, and in the next chapter we notice that he becomes devoted to David, and surrenders all to him.

David comes back to the camp with the giant's sword in one hand and his head in the other. And now I read, "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (chapter 18:1). Yes, he sees and owns

his deliverer. And, my dear friend, when you see the beauty of Jesus, the grace of Jesus, and the value of the blood of Jesus, if you see that by His death He has delivered you and saved you from Satan's power, and that in His clearance of death and judgment the believer now stands in association with Him, your heart will be captivated. He said to His own, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). He said to Mary, after He was risen from the dead, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). He associates us with Himself in life, favour, and relationship before God. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7), is the Spirit's record. I do not wonder that Jonathan's heart was captivated by David, and I hope yours too is won for Jesus fully.

The next thing we read is this, "And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his dress, even to his sword, and to his bow..." (18:4). I think it produced great consternation that day, when the heir to Israel's throne was seen to step out to this simple shepherd lad, take off his royal garments and give them, with his weapons, to David. There is the most perfect surrender. He says, 'My heart is yours, David, and my all is yours'.

My friend, tell me, do you know anything like that in your soul's history? Surrender your all to Christ. It is easily done when a man's heart has been captured. Friend, I do not want your head or your money, but I want your heart, and your heart for Christ. He wants your heart. Do you not feel inclined to yield your heart to Christ to-night? Imitate Jonathan. It was a fine start he made. May you be devoted to Jesus from this night forth.

W. T. P. Wolston

This is the second of the occasional series of preachings from the Old Testament. The first was included in issue number 20.

The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

Psalm 18: 46

He delivereth me from mine enemies:

Psalm 18: 48

WHAT DO I LEARN FROM SCRIPTURE? — PART 1

I learn from the scriptures that there is one living God,
(1 Timothy 2:5; 4:10 & others)

fully revealed to us in Christ, (John 1:18)

and known through Him as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
(Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19, Ephesians 2:18)

in the unity of the Godhead, (John 5:19, 1 Corinthians 12:6)

but revealed as distinctively willing, (John 6:38-40, John 5:21, 1 Corinthians 12:11)

acting, (John 5:17, 1 Corinthians 12:11)

sending, and sent, (John 14:26, 15:26, 5:24, 37, 1 Peter 1:12, John 4:14)

coming, (John 15:26, 16:7-8, 13)

distributing, (1 Corinthians 12:11)

and other actings; or, as habitually expressed amongst christians, three persons in one God, or Trinity in Unity. God is the Creator of all things; but the act of creating is personally attributed to the Word and the Son, and the operation of the Spirit of God.

(Genesis 1:1-2, Job 26:13, John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16 Hebrews 1:2)

I learn that the Word, who was with God and was God, was made flesh,
and dwelt among us, (John 1:1-2, 14)

the Father sending the Son to be the Saviour of the world. (1 John 4:14)

That He, as the Christ, was born of a woman, (Galations 4:4)

by the power of the Holy Spirit coming on the Virgin Mary, (Luke 1:35)

true man, (Philippians 2:7, Hebrews:2:14 & 17, 1 John 4:2, 2 John 7)

without sin, (Luke 1:35, 1 John 3:5)

in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, (Colossians 2:9)

the promised seed of David according to the flesh,
(Romans 1:3, Acts 2:30, 13:23, 2 Timothy 2:8)

the Son of man, (Matthew 16:13 & others)

and Son of God, (John 1:18, 34 & others)

determined to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, (Romans 1:4)

one blessed Person, God and man,
(Philippians 2:6-10, 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, Hebrews 1:2, 1 John:2:23, 3:3, 5:20,
Revelation 22:12-13, John 1:1,14, 8:58, & many others)

the man Christ Jesus, (1 Timothy 2:5)

the anointed man, (Acts 10:38)

Jehovah the Saviour. (Matthew 1:21)

I learn that He died for our sins according to the scriptures,
(1 Corinthians 15:3)

having appeared once in the consummation of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, (Hebrews 9:26)

that He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree, suffering for sins the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (1 Peter 2:24, 3:18)

and that He is our righteousness before God.
(1 Corinthians 1:30, Hebrews 9:24)

I learn that He is risen from the dead,
(1 Corinthians 15:20, Matthew 28:6, & many others)

raised by God, by Himself, by the glory of Father,
(Acts 3:15, John 2:19, Romans 6:4, Ephesians 1:20)

and ascended up on high, (Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, Ephesians 4:8-10 & others)

having by Himself purged our sins, and sits at the right hand of God.
(Hebrews 1:3, 10:12, Ephesians 1:20-21 & others)

J. N. Darby

(This is a re-formatted extract from the "Collected Writings of J. N. Darby" Volume 23.)