

Living Water

In 1767 William Cowper went to live in Olney, Buckinghamshire where he joined with John Newton in writing a series of hymns for the weekly prayer meeting. Four of them are given in this issue. In future issues it is intended to print other hymns written by Cowper and Newton.

A tract called 'A Name Which is Above Every Name' is reproduced in the Testimony section. Copies are available free of charge to anyone who wishes to use them as part of their own testimony to the Lord. Just write to me at the address given at lower down on this page.

It is intended to print other tracts in the Testimony section in the next few issues of this magazine. Many believers feel that there is a lack of tracts suitable for distribution in the present day and I hope that some of those printed will be felt to be suitable. If you know of a tract which you would like to commend as meeting the need of the moment I would be glad to hear from you. Views on the tracts printed in the magazine will also be helpful.

Comments on any aspect of "*Living Water*" are also of course welcome.

Ed.

If you know of any one who might like to subscribe to "*Living Water*" please write to the address below; their name will be added to the mailing list and they will receive the next few issues of the magazine free of charge.

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THE GREATNESS OF GOD IN CREATION AND REDEMPTION

“Canst thou fasten the bands of the Pleiades, or loosen the cords of Orion? Dost thou bring forth the constellations each in its season? or dost thou guide the Bear with her sons?”

(Job 38:31-32)

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ”

(Ephesians 2:13)

I want to draw your attention to the greatness of God in creation and in redemption. For His greatness in creation I point you to the constellations in the heavens. For His greatness in redemption I draw your attention to Calvary and the wonder-working power of the blood that was shed at the cross.

There was once a little boy who was taken to a planetarium. As the lights went down and the image of the heavens came up before them, the commentator began his speech. He said, ‘With the naked eye it is possible to see three thousand stars in the night sky’. As the commentator paused the voice of the little boy was heard counting, ‘One, two, three, four’. The commentator continued, ‘Normally, people believe what I say’. Tonight, in this gospel, I would like something of the wonder that touched that little boy’s heart to touch you, the wonder of the greatness of God. I also want you to believe what we say, to believe the report.

Let us begin then by pausing for a minute to consider the constellations in the heavens. Great men have done it before. Moses, as he began, under the power of God, to write the first chapter of Genesis, got as far as the 16th verse where he had written “And God made the two great lights, the great light to rule the day, and the small light to rule the night”; then he added three little words “and the stars”. Something of the wonder of creation was in the heart of the hymn writer when he wrote:

*‘Oh Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand have made,
I see the stars ...’*

Isaiah, one of the great men of Old Testament times, considered the stars and he said, "God stretched out the heavens like a curtain". And he says, "He measured them with the span of His hand". My friend, could you measure the heavens with the span of your hand? The distance between the tip of your thumb and the tip of your small finger? How great God must be if He measures the heavens with the span of His hand. Isaiah also said, "Lift up your eyes on high, and see! Who hath created these things, bringing out their host by number? He calleth them all by name; through the greatness of his might and strength of power, not one faileth" (Isaiah 40: 22, 12, 26).

The God who numbers the stars, my friend, is the God we speak about in the gospel. He not only counts the stars, He counts the sparrows in the parks and the side streets of Chester. He counts every lily on the village ponds and He counts the hairs on your head and mine. God, we realise, is interested even in us although the heavens be so great.

Just as He spoke to Job so He would speak to you and me tonight and He would ask us the same questions as He asked Job. Why did God choose these constellations—Pleiades, Orion and the Bear? From my school days the only one I really remember anything about was the Bear which is the one which is more commonly called the Plough. God chose those three out of all His heavens, and why should He? Well, the Pleiades is probably the most famous cluster of stars. Orion is the most beautiful constellation in the heavens. As for the Plough, as you trace the arc of the Plough up to the end of it, if you draw a line between the end two stars and continue it into the heavens it directs you to the Pole star, the one that always tells you which direction is North.

So God chose these which were the most magnificent and most important ones, and He asks Job first of all, if he can fasten the bands of Pleiades? 'Job, could you have taken that cluster of stars out of all the heavens and put them into that nice neat little bundle up there?' God has put the Pleiades in a tight little cluster. They have remained like that in the heavens from the day He created them, and from the day Job looked at them and they are there tonight. God asked Job, 'Can you fasten them like that?' And Job would have had to say, 'No'.

Then God points to Orion and asks, 'Job, can you loosen the band of Orion?' Across the centre of the constellation of Orion is what is known as Orion's belt. Three distinct stars equally spaced out. And God said to Job, 'Can you reach up to those three stars that form Orion's belt and can you loosen them? Can you move them a little bit further apart, Job.?' And again Job would have had to say, 'No'.

We cannot do it either.

Then God says, 'Can you guide the Plough through the heavens?' It does not matter what season it is, the Plough moves round the Pole star, (that North star). Whatever season, whichever night, those two stars at the end of the Plough constantly point to the Pole star. That is wonderful. Through the ages explorers and navigators have watched those heavens and the Pole star has been their guide. God says, 'Job, could you have done that?' and Job has to say 'No, I could not do it'.

There are things that are impossible to man, but they are possible to God. Just as Job could not change the distance between those stars—and neither can you or I—neither can we do anything about the distance between us and God. It is impossible for you or me to remove the distance that exists between God and ourselves.

Why is there a distance? Did you know there was a distance? It says in the Bible, "your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you" (Isaiah 59:2). Can man do anything to remove this distance? On one side is God in His holiness and on the other side sinners in our guilt and sins. How can the two be brought together? Can man reconcile himself to God? No. Can God do it? Yes! God has done it! God has removed the distance between me the sinner, you the sinner, and Himself. He has removed the distance that we might be brought together.

My friend, if that be so, is it not a proof that God not only thinks of us but that He loves us too? He loves us so much that He has provided salvation for us. And not just salvation, but salvation that is so complete that you and I can live for ever with Him in eternity, in heaven. How great these things are!

If God has done it, where did He do it? He did it at Calvary. There are many constellations in the heavens, but there is only one Calvary. There at Calvary, once and for all, the Son of God died as our Saviour. Wonderful fact.

You look at the heavens, you see the greatness of God's power. When you look at Calvary you see the greatness of His love when the Saviour died and the greatness of His power as He raised Him from among the dead. It is the supreme demonstration of God's love and power and the effect is that the sinner can be saved. You can be saved, I have been saved. I want you to be saved as well.

We are all sinners. I was once where you are tonight if you are still not saved. I had committed sins. I had turned my back on God. I was under the power of Satan. I was the devil's prisoner. As a sinner Satan controlled me just like a puppet. He had strings attached to my feet and to my hands. At Satan's bidding my feet took me where I should not have been, my hands did things I should not have done. I was Satan's puppet! Is that your position tonight, under the power of Satan and he controls your life? We need someone to break the shackles to set us free. We cannot do it ourselves, and no one can do it for us. "None can by any means redeem his brother; nor give to God a ransom for him" (Psalm 49:7).

So how are we going to be set free? We need someone to come from outside the domain of sin, go into it and conquer the devil and overcome his power, break our shackles and lead us out in liberty. Is there anyone who can come from outside the domain of sin and do this? Yes there is! Jesus the mighty Son of God came to this world where sin had dominion, and He came to overcome the devil, to break the power of sin, and to conquer death.

It meant the One who was sinless had to go to the cross of Calvary and die for you and me. He had entered this world but was undefiled by the sin that abounded in it. He went to the cross as the spotless victim. There on that cross He died in our place. He took our sins upon Himself and He died in our stead.

Just pause for a minute at Calvary. Look at that cross where the Saviour died. I stand amazed before the cross in the presence of the Nazarene, the One who died. I was only a sinner, a condemned sinner, an unclean sinner, but there He died for me.

As you look at the cross may something of the wonder of Calvary touch you, that the Son of God died for you on that cross. As you look at the One who died there, is there an echo in your heart of the words of a convert of old, who said, "the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me" (Galatians 2:20)? Maybe as you take account of the blood which flowed from Him, there is an echo in your heart of Peter's words, "knowing that ye have been redeemed, not by corruptible things, as silver or gold, ... but by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1: 18,19).

Does the cross mean anything to you? Does the One who died on it mean anything to you? He died for you. The wood of the cross has decayed, the nails have rusted, the thorns that were on the Saviour's brow have withered long ago. But the Saviour who died on that cross lives tonight. I point you to a living Saviour. That is what makes the Christian gospel different from religions of men. I do not point you tonight to an idol that has never lived, nor to one like Mohammed who has lived and died. I point you to Christ who has lived and died and who lives again.

That is what makes the gospel real. Not only do we preach redemption but we preach a living Redeemer. We not only preach salvation but also a living Saviour. How great and how glorious is our gospel. Well might we say in the words of the hymn:

*'There is power, power, wonder-working power,
In the precious blood of the Lamb'.*

Men planned the crucifixion but God had planned the resurrection. On the third day He brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus. Later Jesus ascended above all the heavens. He left Orion and the Pleiades and the Plough far behind Him; He passed through all the heavens. He is there in the presence of God now, a mighty Saviour!

He sits in heaven tonight and the power of the blood is such that those who are afar off can be brought nigh, even to God Himself. The distance that was there is totally gone. If you believe in Christ, my friend, you are going to be where He is for all eternity. The Bible does not give us much detail of what eternity will be

like. The Lord speaks of "My Father's house", the Bible tells us of the holy city, and the Lord speaks of our being where He is. If you believe in Jesus you are going to be there with Him. Wherever you look you will see that the prayer of the Saviour has been answered that, "Where I am they also may be" (John 17:24).

What is your position tonight, my friend? The blood of Christ is there available to remove the distance between you and God.. The message in the gospel has not changed. My friend, begin tonight by believing and repenting. You know you are a sinner. You are like I was once but I repented of my sins. I realised I had done wrong. I had to get those things taken out of the way. It was only Jesus who could do it. So I repented of my sins and claimed the righteousness that is offered me through believing in Jesus, the Saviour. In that way I am granted forgiveness, eternal life, and eternity in heaven.

Are you going to be in heaven? Every believer in this room will be there. What about you? What do you think about heaven? If you come to Jesus tonight and claim Him as your righteousness the heavenly scribes will take up their pens and they will write in heaven's book that today you were saved. You confessed your sins and you believed in Jesus Christ. If you do that this will be a night of rejoicing because you will have peace in your heart that you have never had before. You will have the assurance in your heart that your name has been written in heaven.

Do you think eternity in heaven is worth going for? You will spend eternity either in heaven because of the blood of Jesus, or in hell because you reject Him. You may remember that around the cross one of the things they said about Jesus was: "He saved others". If you find yourself in hell, in eternity, that will be the wail of your heart, He saved others!

Eternity with Jesus, because you trusted in His precious blood, will be the most wonderful joy. Heaven is worth going for, my friend! When S—— and I—— were over from Russia with us in Scotland a few years ago, they had come from the poverty of Russia to the wealth of the households of Britain. As they sat at a meal one night and they looked at all the food that was spread on the table, S—— put his hand on I——'s shoulder and said, 'Little country girl, you never thought

you would be here'. When you and I get to heaven and see the wonder of it all, we will realise as never before that we would never have been there but for the blood of Jesus. We are going to be there, every one of us who has trusted in the peerless, precious blood of the Saviour.

I leave this with you. There is only one Saviour. He is my Saviour and, as I said at the beginning, I am praying tonight that my precious Saviour might be your Saviour too. May you have that joy in your heart tonight, for His name's sake.

Oh Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand have made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

And when I think, that God His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die—I scarce can take it in:
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died, to take away my sin.

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home—what joy shall fill my heart!
Then shall I bow in humble adoration,
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art.

Brian Pirie

Gospel preaching at Chester, 23rd May, 1997

JOHN'S VIEW OF THE RAPTURE

“Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe on God, believe also on me. In my Father’s house there are many abodes; were it not so, I had told you: for I go to prepare you a place; and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be.”

(John 14:1-3)

“Beloved, now are we children of God, and what we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as *he* is pure.”

(1 John 3:2,3)

I would like to convey an impression of the glory of what is before the Lord’s people in relation to the ‘rapture’. I trust that we all understand what the thought of the ‘rapture’ is. Many truths are laid out for us in considerable detail in Scripture and although there is very little direct teaching about the ‘rapture’, we would look to the Lord that He might give us a living touch about it at this time. The word ‘rapture’ in this context means the act of transporting a person from one sphere of existence to another.

The rapture has been referred to as ‘the next great event’, but I prefer to speak about it as involving the Person of the Lord Jesus because the rapture is all about a living, glorious Man. That the rapture is more than merely an event is shown in the last scripture I have read: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Revelation 22:7). The Spirit and the bride would not say “Come” to an event; they are speaking to a Person, to the Lord Jesus.

What a time it will be when the Lord comes into His rights publicly. That is the time referred to in scripture as “His appearing” when He will be seen by all and universally acknowledged and adored. But the rapture is a more private matter and focuses attention on the Person who is coming. Are we each looking forward to seeing the Lord Jesus? As the hymn puts it:

*‘And shall we see Thy face,
And hear Thy heav’nly voice’.*

Yes, we shall see His face! We have not seen Him yet, but we shall see Him. And to see Him we shall be like Him. The condition in which we are will be changed to enable us to see Him as He is.

The scripture read in John 14 is the Lord's own promise: "I am coming again". The Lord is not sending another for us; He is coming Himself to claim us. Why? Because He wants us to be where He is. "That where I am ye also may be."

One of the things that was very much part of the "faith once delivered to the saints" was the expectation that at any moment the Lord might come and call His people to be with Himself. We tend to get earthly minded and materialistic in our thoughts, but there is a Man who is coming to receive us to Himself because He loves us. The Lord says, "I am coming". It is not, 'I will come'. It is a present matter in the Lord's mind. He is coming again.

Are we holding things lightly enough to let them go when He comes? Oh you say, 'I have got things here that I have to see to'. Yes, we have to see to righteousness but are we ready to go to be with the Lord? It could be that He will come tonight. Scripture says: "Yea, I come quickly" (Revelation 22:20).

One of the hymn-writers says:

*Lord, kindle within us a holy desire,
Like that which was found in Thy people of old,
Who tasted Thy love, and whose hearts were on fire,
While waiting, in patience, Thy face to behold.'*

Let us be more committed in our outlook towards the Lord's coming. The hope of the christian is the Person who is coming. The rapture is not to be merely a matter of doctrine; it should lay hold of our hearts that a Person is coming for us and we are going to be with Him for all eternity. The Lord would assure us of this so that our hearts need not be troubled but would be reposing in the fact that it is His promise and His word is sure. I say again, may the expectation of it, and the glory of it engage our hearts the more, that He is coming Himself.

He has gone to prepare a place for us. Someone else has said that our place is prepared by virtue of His being there. He has done everything for us. All that needed to be done He has done. His place there guarantees a place for all who belong to Him. "I go to prepare you a place."

Now, in his epistle John tells us: "What we shall be has not yet been manifested". That, I suppose, suggests that the condition into which we shall be changed has not yet been shown. Then John says, "if it is manifested", that is when it really comes to pass, "we shall be like him". What a wonderful thing! Can you think of anything better? To be like Him. The hymn puts it: 'Like Jesus! grace supreme!'

These bodies are to be changed to be like His glorious body. It suggests that the condition in which we are is not equal to seeing the Lord as He is. We may feel strong and have great ability but we will not see Him in our present condition. We have to be changed to see Him as He is. What a wonderful act of grace, that we shall be like Him as He is.

Now this is to have a most fundamental and practical effect on our lives. John tells us that everyone that has this hope in Him purifies himself even as He is pure. Our lives are to be consistent with our faith. John first presents to us the Person and then the objective. He says there is to be consistency, conformity to that in our lives. We are to purify ourselves even as He is pure. That is the standard—to keep ourselves pure. Young men and young women here, we live in a defiling world. On every hand, in the newspapers, in advertising, in literature there is defilement. Be careful what you read. The world is full of defiling books. I think, if we are to enjoy true church privileges, we are to have a judgment of the literature of the world. It is defiling, and damaging to the mind. We are to purify ourselves even as He is pure.

I admit that my thoughts are not always consistent with what is pure, but I seek in the grace of the Spirit to judge my thoughts so that I might be in keeping with the blessedness, the expectation of seeing Him. My hope is in Him, in a living Person. I am told about it in the scripture, but my hope is in a Person.

"He that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as *he* is pure." May we be practically helped on these lines. The devil seeks to drag us down to the level of the world and its entertainments. But another Man has come into our lives. He engages the affections of His people and we are to purify ourselves even as He is pure. May the appeal of that come home livingly to our hearts.

This, I understand, is John's impression of the rapture.

Malcolm Wallach

Extracted from an address at Portknockie, 24th May, 1997

HEAR WHAT HE HATH DONE FOR MY SOUL

Saved by blood I live to tell,
What the love of Christ hath done;
He redeem'd my soul from hell,
Of a rebel made a son:
Oh I tremble still, to think
How secure I lived in sin;
Sporting on destruction's brink,
Yet preserved from falling in.

In His own appointed hour,
To my heart the Saviour spoke,
Touched me by His Spirit's power,
And my dang'rous slumber broke.
Then I saw and owned my guilt,
Soon my gracious Lord replied;
'Fear not, I my blood have shed,
'Twas for such as thee I died'.

Shame and wonder, joy and love,
All at once possessed my heart;
Can I hope this grace to prove,
After acting such a part?
'Thou hast greatly sinned,' He said,
'But I freely all forgive;
I Myself the debt have paid,
Now I bid thee rise and live'.

Come, my fellow sinners, try,
Jesus' heart is full of love;
Oh that you, as well as I,
May His wondrous mercy prove!
He has sent me to declare,
All is ready, all is free;
Why should any soul despair,
When He saved a wretch-like me?

John Newton (1725 - 1807)

WALKING WITH GOD

By faith in Christ I walk with God,
With heav'n, my journeys-end in view;
Supported by His staff and rod,
My road is safe and pleasant too.

I travel thro' a desert wide,
Where many round me blindly stray;
But He vouchsafes to be my guide,
And will not let me miss my way.

Tho' snares and dangers throng my path,
And earth and hell my course withstand;
I triumph over all by faith,
Guarded by His almighty hand.

The wilderness affords no food,
But God for my support prepares;
Provides me every needful good,
And frees my soul from wants and cares.

With Him sweet converse I maintain,
Great as He is I dare be free;
I tell Him all my grief and pain,
And He reveals His love to me.

Some cordial from His word He brings,
Whene'er my feeble spirit faints;
At once my soul revives and sings,
And yields no more to sad complaints.

I pity all that worldlings talk
Of pleasures that will quickly end;
Be this my choice, O Lord, to walk
With Thee my Guide, my Guard, my Friend.

John Newton (1725 - 1807)

THE CHIEFEST AMONG TEN THOUSAND

Honour and happiness unite
To make the Chieftain's name a praise;
How fair the scene, how clear the light,
The glory of those heavenly lays.

A kingly character He bears,
No change His priestly office knows;
Unfading is the crown He wears,
His joys can never reach a close.

Adorn'd with glory from on high,
Salvation shines upon His face;
His robe is of th' ethereal dye,
His steps are dignity and grace.

Inferior honours He disdains,
Nor stoops to take applause from earth;
The King of Kings Himself maintains
The glory of His heavenly worth.

The noblest person here below,
Ordained to fill a throne above;
God gives Him all He can bestow,
His kingdom of eternal love!

William Cowper (1731 - 1800)

MY SOUL THIRSTETH FOR GOD

I thirst; but not as once I did;
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid,
That I should seek my pleasures there.
It was the sight of Thy blest cross,
First weaned my soul from earthly things;
And taught me to esteem as dross,
The mirth of fools, and pomp of kings:
I want that grace that springs from Thee,
That quickens all things where it flows;
And makes a wretched thorn, like me,
Bloom as the myrtle, or the rose.
For sure of all the plants that share
The notice of Thy Father's eye;
None proves less grateful of His care,
Or yields Him meaner fruit than I.

William Cowper (1731 - 1800)

JESUS—A NAME WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME

It remains when all else disappears, endures when everything else perishes and retains fame and prestige in the midst of passing splendour. Many sober minded leaders recognise it; it has stirred the memories of stricken sailors and dying miners. Many a doctor has been strengthened by it. It has been a power for hope and comfort to the despairing in prisons and cruel camps. Angels know it and worship, while they rejoice in seeing it received in faith in human hearts.

It will endure, for the changeless will of God has decreed it. Schemes, plans, conspiracies, ambitions hold sway for a while but the sway of the name of Jesus will continue for ever.

The unfailling testimony of that Name has echoed in the palaces and theatres of ancient Rome - it was carried to the limits of that far flung empire. When the empire fell, the Name remained and reached on to other lands, ever spreading, always the same in unfailling attractiveness, arising afresh for each new generation in power for blessing.

In an unceasing effort to remove the name of Jesus from the earth Satan has employed all his power. By persecution, destruction, flattery, fraud, patronage, promises, corruption and violence he has carried on his campaign to blot it out—but it is here yet!

The Name lives because Jesus lives to the ages of ages.

Do you know of any other name like it? Is there any other name of which we can truly say such wonderful things?

Like a lone mountain peak rising high above others in gleaming majesty so the name of Jesus stands unsurpassed in its own great testimony to men. God intends that it shall be so in order that people every where shall look to Jesus.

The Bible says:

“There is none other **name** under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved.”

“Thou shalt call his **name** Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

“Whosoever shall call upon the **name** of the Lord shall be saved.”

Where else can we look with hope? It is a time of great fear and uncertainty. New powers for death and destruction are constantly developed and the peace for which many have toiled, fought and died is further away than ever. Yet peace is to be found in Jesus.

Some names are loathsome, some inspire courage, others fear but the name of Jesus has a God given attractiveness which no other name could ever have. No one fled from Him in fear, but great crowds came to Him to hear His wonderful speaking. With great feeling He cried out: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest".

He has not changed. The same words of earnest, loving entreaty come to you today from Jesus who died for our sins, was raised from the dead and is crowned with glory and honour. His name is an imperishable commendation to every one of whatever race or nationality of the marvellous grace of God which would have all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

Find Jesus as your Saviour today. Ask Him to come into your life and cleanse you from your sins. He will fill you with joy and peace in believing.

Based on "A Name Which is Above Every Name" by H. R. Wilkinson

SIX THINGS IN THE DAILY LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

PART 2 —DAILY WATCHING AT WISDOM'S GATES

“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favour of the Lord.” (Proverbs 8:34 & 35).

The allusion in these verses is to an eastern court, where certain favoured ones are admitted to the privilege of being near the monarch. In the first chapter of Esther we read of seven princes who “saw the king’s face”. Others may read his commands and hear about him at a distance, but these stand in his presence and hear his voice. Are you going in for this, beloved young christians? The glorious Person who has been from eternity the delight of the heart of God has set His love upon us: He has revealed Himself to us as the One who has found His delight in us. Is that Person so holding your heart—are you so delighting in Him—that your whole inner life consists in hearing Him, in watching daily at His gates, and waiting at the posts of His doors?

The grand secret of spiritual freshness and soul-prosperity is to have the Person of Christ so before the heart that we are attracted to Himself with intense longing to know Him better. Now, beloved, let us challenge our hearts as to this! Are we on the alert to improve our acquaintance with Christ? The great defect of modern christianity is that there is so little affection for Christ.

Many hear what is called a “clear gospel”, and trusting the blood and work of Christ they get the assurance of the Word of God that they will never perish, and this seems to satisfy them and they settle down upon it and go to sleep. There is not the earnest longing after Himself—the watching daily at His gates. Did it ever occur to you that Christ values your affections? You belong to Him; you are the object of His love; you are ‘His own’. Your heart is Christ’s property: is it His dwelling-place? His love counts on your giving Him a place in your affections, so that He may dwell in your heart by faith. If He does dwell there, you may depend upon it that you will be watching daily at His gates—not only seeking His benefits but longing after Himself, and finding it the deepest joy of your heart that you are admitted to personal acquaintance with Him.

If you read some of the works of the old divines you would be amazed to see how their hearts thirsted after Christ; they were absorbed with His Person and love; He was the 'Object bright and fair' after which their hearts longed. Oh, that it might be more so with ourselves!

Look at Mary of Magdala—in her day a lovely example of this precious affection for Christ! Apostles did not attract her heart; she let them go to their homes without her. Angels, the highest order in creation, speak to her, but leave her unsatisfied. She does not even turn to look properly at the supposed gardener. She has forgotten herself—a weak and defenceless woman—as she says, "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away". It was Himself that her devoted heart longed after with all the intensity of its affection. She watched at His gates and waited at the posts of His doors; and did she not obtain favour of the Lord? No such message of divine love as that which she carried was ever entrusted to human lips before.

Andrew and John knew something of what I am speaking of when the longing of their hearts was expressed in the question: "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" John 1:38 & 39. They wanted to be in His company; they were in their day found watching at His gates and waiting at the posts of His doors. And what favour they obtained! "He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day."

Was it not a royal day for them? Do you think they will ever forget it? Oh! it is a glorious day for the heart when it makes personal acquaintance with Christ. I dare say there are some here tonight who could tell you that the deep joy of that hour was infinitely greater than the joy of the hour when they learnt the perfect efficacy of His work. Nor would the Lord have this to be a transient experience. They "abode with him that day"—a day typical of the whole present period—and though He is no longer in the world He would have us abiding with Him. His love could think of no sweeter portion for us than to have a part with Him, and no service of His love is more precious to a devoted heart than that washing by which He removes the defilement of the world from our feet that we may have a part with Himself where He dwells with the Father; John 13. Does not your heart long to taste more deeply the blessedness of the one who watches daily at His gates, and waits at the posts of His doors?

Paul is another example of this when he tells us that he counted all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, and that he counted all things but dung that he might win Christ, and know Him. To attain this he was pressing on as a man wholly absorbed by one object. To use once more the words before us, he was watching daily at His gates, and waiting at the posts of His doors. And did he not "obtain favour of the Lord"? Was it a small thing to be able to say as an experimental reality, 'Our citizenship is in heaven?' or to say, "I have learnt, in those circumstances in which I am, to be satisfied in myself" (Philippians 4:11)? Or to say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13)? He did indeed verify the blessing spoken of in Proverbs 8: 34, 35. May our hearts be very much drawn after that blessed Person in glory that we may verify it too.

C. A. Coates

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

SIMPLICITY

Matthew 6: 22-23

Romans 16: 19-20

2 Corinthians 11: 1-3

I would like to encourage us to be persons of one mind. James tells us that a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways: that is a word that all may well take to heart.

An older believer once said that a christian ought to be a man of one book. Could that be true of us? Do we really value that fact that in the Holy Scriptures we possess something of incalculable value and of which there is no equal? May I encourage each of us to acquire the knowledge of it, for there is nothing to equal it and, not only is there rich food for our souls but it is the great safeguard in a world of error.

It has pleased God to use this means of conveying to man by His written word the knowledge of the best things of His own mind. So I would say 'Do not neglect this means of grace'; make a point, beloved young people, of acquiring

each day, a little more knowledge of the precious word of God. One said of old, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

What we read in Matthew tells of people who are listening to the word of the King, and what He is saying is of paramount importance, and whose words can be compared with His? Again, may I make a special appeal to all of us, but especially to the younger people, to pay very special attention to these utterances of the Lord Jesus which are generally known as 'the sermon on the mount'. A good foundation will in this way be laid in your soul as you put into practice what is said, and it will make a good assembly person of you.

Individually we all need regulation, and that comes in the words of Jesus to those who are subjects of His kingdom. Who can attempt to modify what He has said about any matter? His word is final to us and, "What shall a man do that cometh after the king?". The state of confusion in the public side of things has come about by man tampering with the Lord's authority and His word. What He says is plain for all to understand.

We read: "The lamp of the body is the eye". The Lord contrasts the single eye with having two different objects at once. It is a great matter to have a single eye. When the time came to make David king (1 Chronicles 12:38) it is said, "All ... came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king". A remark that has remained with me through many years was that 'You only needed to look in the eye of every person in that great host to see who was king, every eye was on David!' Is that true of every person here? Are our eyes fixed on Christ? There is only one Man in the eye of God and He is to be the only Man in your eye, and mine. That is the way to get the body full of light.

What does it mean for the body to be full of light? Scripture speaks of a body as consisting of its members, that is eyes, ears, feet, hands, tongue. Can it be said of us that all our members are commanded by the light that shines in the face of Christ? Think about our feet—do we watch where we walk? Are we concerned as to our path? Are we concerned about our tongues? What about what we lend your ears to? Think of being illuminated in all our activities by the blessed light that shines in the face of Jesus. What a most blessed control that would be! what rest of soul, and what peace of mind it brings even in this turbulent world!

At a time when circumstantially everything appeared to be failing we read, "At that time, Jesus answering said, I praise thee, Father, ... for thus has it been well-pleasing in thy sight" (Matthew 11:25-26). He went on to offer to those who would come to Him the same rest of soul that He enjoyed. We see Him in His blessed manhood on earth glowing with moral beauty in the eye of His Father and now He is the same in His supreme attractiveness in conditions of glory in heaven above and just as available to all who come to him in faith.

One who is a babe in Christ has such blessedness available at all times. You and I are called to take character from Christ and it comes about by having a single eye for the Person of the Lord Jesus; a single ear for His word and the single motive, His pleasure, in our work for Him. I appeal to you thus that you might have the satisfaction in your ordinary circumstances of life, of glowing with the light that comes into your soul through occupation with Christ. You may not say a word, but what is within cannot help shining out. It says of Jesus—He could not be hid. Wherever He was, He shone. May it become true of us a little more.

The Lord goes on to speak of "two masters". Here is a double minded person—trying to serve two masters—half a christian and half a worldling. Is there anything more miserable than a half-hearted man or woman, particularly one who professes to be a believer? How can a believer have one foot in the world and one in the kingdom? To start with, there is no part in the world for a believer in the Lord Jesus, but this half and half situation comes about by not having a single eye for Christ, and if your eye is not single then the body will be dark. Let us see to it that there are no patches of darkness in our activities, and do away with double-mindedness and be firmly set in the path of the will of God, with that single eye for the glory of Christ. Surely our hearts' affections are His who loves us and has given Himself for us. What a claim He has on us!

In Romans, the apostle gives some very fine and wise advice, "I wish you to be wise as to that which is good, and simple as to evil". The whole field of what is good is connected with what shines out in Christ as the One in whom is all the light of the revelation of the blessed God in grace and glory. God's interests are going to last forever, they are secure in Christ, and Christ's interests are bound up with His church. May we indeed be concerned to be wise in this great field of what is good.

Then it also says: "Simple as to what is evil". I do not go into what is evil, but would warn you, if I can, by pointing out that there is an "evil one" (Matthew 13:38). There is an active source of evil in the world, one that the Lord Jesus describes as His "enemy" (Matthew 13). This evil one is the god of this world and in character and words and works, in every possible way, he is personally enemy to Christ and against those that are Christ's. Resist every attempt on his part to deflect you from the path of the will of God. This evil world has no place for Christ, and we must remember that He gave Himself for our sins in order that He might deliver us from it (Galatians 1:4). In its passions, and politics, industry and commerce it has no time for Christ, and we are to have no time for it. The world has rejected our Lord Jesus and cast Him out as worthless.

Jesus said: "out of the heart of men, go forth evil thoughts" (Mark 7:21). It is not my thought to occupy you with evil, but to warn you about it: to be 'simple' about it, to have a judgment of it and keep away from it. God has given His Holy Spirit to believers, to dwell in our hearts, and bring the thoughts of Christ there, all in view of practical righteousness, so that we may tread a path that is pleasing to God. Be simple as to what is evil and wise as to what is good. Most of you young people may be going in for examinations and acquiring knowledge and there are great resources for those things in the world of education, but be wise as to what is good, and whenever there is a decision to make, remember to make that your first priority. Put God first and call upon the Holy Spirit for help.

Where we read in Corinthians, Paul is addressing a local company of christians, showing that the first thing in such a company was that it should be for the pleasure of the heart of Christ Himself, that is, devoted and set for the satisfaction of the love of Christ. Of course, in its fulness that must involve the whole church, and the day of the marriage of the Lamb will be the full expression of these wondrous things. In the meantime we touch the privilege of it in our local settings by the power of the Spirit, in whose power we have been baptised into one body.

Paul endured immense sufferings to bring the saints into the present good of these things, and the list of perils that he gives us later in chapter 11 gives some indication of what it cost him to do it. The burden of his ministry was to bring about a local company that could be presented to Christ as a chaste virgin having before it the Lord Jesus Christ alone to the exclusion of all others, and united in

affection and spirit for His service and pleasure. What a marvellous thing to have in our hearts! The same blessed Man who attracted you into blessing through the glad tidings is the same One who now commands the united affections of His church. The question arises, what are we prepared to suffer or to labour in, to promote that in the locality where we live?

We come together to break bread in remembrance of the Lord Jesus and the love of Christ comes into our souls in a fresh way as we partake of the emblems, and we are united in response to that love. What is in His heart is towards us and we have a foretaste of the affections that belong to Him as Head of the church. We see something of His glory as the firstborn among many brethren, and are led by Him into the presence of the Father, in the place and grace of sonship—a spiritual company which He leads in praise for the Father's good pleasure. All this flows from the fact that the local company is committed to one Man.

Paul says "I have espoused you ... (as) a chaste virgin to Christ". How far is this true with us? It speaks of affections that are not sullied or tainted with any feature that belongs to this corrupt and perishing world but are coloured and beautified by what is heavenly. I would that I could give you some impression of what it is to have part in these affections. It would stir our hearts in response. These are the real things of christianity. Response to Christ and to the Father are real spiritual experiences. What a wonderful thing it is that we can know the love of Christ. When we consider how widespread and universal His interests are, and then to realise that He sets aside these interests for the time being to be united to His assembly as we learn from Ephesians 5:31, we get an impression of His great love. What kind of reply is there from our hearts to that blessed and glorious Man? He surely commands our affectionate, simple, single-heartedness in every local company and every person in them.

But here too there is a word of warning. We live in a bad world; there is an enemy about; and Paul says, "I fear lest by any means" (and the means that Satan has are many and varied; he knows how to tempt you differently from me, and he will introduce elements of trouble into a local company;) "by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craft". That was not a gross thing, it was cleverly worded, and well spoken. It appealed to the intelligence and looked good but the result was disaster. When a local or general company or an individual gets under Satan's influence the result is their thoughts are corrupted

from simplicity as to the Christ. We need to be on our guard against this terrible thing at the present time. There is a determined enemy set on corrupting church affections for Christ. There will be assembly affections for Christ right up to the rapture we know, but Satan will do his best to spoil in your heart and mine the affections that are pure and virgin and chaste to Christ. Oh! that we might rise to meet the challenge of it and set our hearts diligently to provide what satisfies the heart of that blessed Man who gave Himself in the shameful circumstances of Golgotha's cross in order to win and secure the affections of us all. Who can measure what it meant to Him as it says, "Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

Are we all in the benefit of it? I would appeal to each of us to yield to the import of this verse and to the claims of Him who so loved us and see to it that there is no other man before any of us than the Man Christ Jesus.

John L Wallach

WHAT DO I LEARN FROM SCRIPTURE? – PART 2

I learn that after Christ's ascension the Holy Ghost was sent down to dwell in His people individually and collectively, so that in both ways they are the temple of God, (John 16:7, 7:39, Romans 8:9)

the Father sends, (John 14:26)

Christ sends from the Father, (John 14:16-17,26, Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 3:16, Ephesians 2:22, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 5:30, 1:23, & others)

we are sealed, (Ephesians 1:13, 2 Corinthians 1:22)

and anointed with this Spirit, (2 Corinthians 1:21, 1 John 2:20, 27)

the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts, (Romans 5:5)

we are led by Him, (Romans 8:14)

and He is the earnest of our inheritance, (Ephesians 1:14, 2 Corinthians 1:22,5:5)

we cry, Abba, Father, knowing we are sons. (Romans 8:15, Galations 4:6)

I learn that Christ will come again to receive us to Himself, (John 14:3)
raising those that are His, or changing them if living, fashioning their bodies like His glorious body, according to the power by which He is able to subdue all things to Himself,

(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 1 Corinthians 15:23, 51-52, Philippians 3:20-21)
and that those of them who die meanwhile will depart and be with Him.

(2 Corinthians 5:8, Luke 23:43, Acts 7:59)

I learn that God has appointed a day in which He will judge this habitable world in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained, whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Him from the dead,
(Acts 17:31)

and that at the end He will sit on the great white throne, and judge the dead, small and great.
(Revelation 20:11-12)

I learn that every one of us shall give an account of himself to God,
(Romans 14:12)

and receive the things done in the body, whether they be good or evil,
(2 Corinthians 5:10)

and as the righteous inherit eternal life, Romans 6:22-23, Matthew 25:46)

so the wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, will go into everlasting punishment, be cast into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels; and that whosoever is not found in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire.

(2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, Matthew 25:46, Revelation 20:15)

J. N. Darby

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

"I will not forget thy word" (Psalm 119:16)