

Living Water

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PAUL'S VIEW OF THE RAPTURE

“For if we believe that Jesus has died and has risen again, so also God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. (For this we say to you in the word of the Lord, that we, the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord, are in no way to anticipate those who have fallen asleep; for the Lord himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel’s voice and with trump of God, shall descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always with the Lord. So encourage one another with these words.)”
1 Thessalonians 4:14-18

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 from the scripture: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Revelation 22:17). The Spirit and the bride would not say “Come” to an event; they are speaking to a Person, to the Lord Jesus.

In 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul is speaking about the actual sequence of events entailed in the rapture. In using the expression: “This we say to you in the word of the Lord”, he is speaking in the full assurance of the authority of the Lord. There is something emphatic in the statement, indicating the display of the Lord’s power—His energy. The teaching of 1 Corinthians 15:35-55 relates to the resurrection, detailing the mystery of the change and what takes place on earth at the time of the rapture, but not the actual rapture itself, whereas 1 Thessalonians 4 gives us what the rapture is all about, that the Lord Himself is coming to take us away to be for ever with Himself.

So the word is, "The Lord himself". What a statement that is! "The Lord himself, with an assembling shout". It is His own action, His voice. Then we get "the trump of God"; God sets His seal on it. These are very stirring words and suggest a military idea. I understand that when the Roman army broke camp various trumpet calls sounded. There were calls to 'get ready', but at the last call, the last trump, the army had to move and that is what is suggested here. The Lord will descend from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise first. Think of the glory of that. He speaks the word; the dead in Him will rise first—all the sleeping ones. Many here will have buried someone in their family, someone who has been loved very dearly. At the Lord's assembling shout all will arise from their graves. What a majestic display of His love and His power it will be.

Mr. Stoney has a very interesting suggestion as to what the Lord's words might be; he suggests that they might be: 'Let mine arise'. All who have died in Christ belong to Him and they will arise! In the gospels, Lazarus came out when he was called (John 11:43); to the youth at Nain the Lord says: "Youth, I say to thee, Wake up" (Luke 7:14); to Jairus' daughter Jesus says: "Damsel, I say to thee, Arise" (Mark 5:41). When those words were spoken they came out of death. Think of the great host that will arise out of the dust of death when the Lord calls His own. There will be the true coming to pass of the Lord's word, "I am the resurrection" (John 11:25); they will all arise from their graves, not one left behind.

Then He is not only "the resurrection" but He is also "the life". I suppose that relates to the living. "Then we the living who remain". The Lord is the resurrection to those who have died and the life of those who remain. Then we shall be caught up together. This, I think, is the actual meaning of the word 'rapture'—'caught up'. None will be left behind. How long will it take? It will be in an instant. Scripture says in the "twinkling of an eye". Not the winking of an eye, the twinkling of an eye, an almost imperceptible movement, is all the time that is required for this to take place.

He is a glorious, coming Saviour. Wonderful glorious Man in whom all power is resident. And He will "transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory, according to the working of the power which He has even to subdue all things to himself" (Philippians 3:21). "And thus we shall be always with the Lord." May that warm our hearts, stimulate our affections, and lead us to be here pleasing to Him.

Finally, Paul says, "encourage one another with these words". We need encouragement today. Many here have come a long journey and I desire that you might go home with some encouragement, that the things I am speaking about are about to happen; they are not fanciful theories but they involve a living Man who is coming and is coming quickly.

This, I understand, is Paul's view of the rapture.

Malcolm Wallach

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

WHAT JESUS BEGAN TO DO AND TO TEACH

Mark 6:30-37

John 13:1-5 & 15

Luke 24:13-17

24:29-31

The verse which has affected me for this occasion is in the Acts of the apostles chapter 1:1, "the things which Jesus began both to do and to teach". What Jesus has begun is not finished yet. The book of the Acts has been said to be the only unfinished book of the Bible. The gospels tell us what Jesus did in flesh and blood conditions; Acts tells us what He is doing as a glorious Man in heaven by the Spirit at the present time; He is still moving in love and affection for each of us.

The work began at Jerusalem, the place where Jesus was crucified, and all radiated from there. The work of the Lord is still going on right down to our own day. It is very precious to take account of what Jesus is doing at the present time. It should cause our hearts to be energised in the furtherance of the testimony at the present time.

So it says: "He began both to do and to teach". Speaking reverently, there is no one so practical as Jesus. What He set on is something we should take notice of. He is not asking us to do anything He has not done Himself. He is the great Leader. It speaks of Him in Hebrews as, "the leader and completer of faith" (Hebrews 12:2). He is a wonderful and glorious Man who has set on everything for the blessed God and is carrying everything through in the power of His love. He began both to do and to teach.

At the beginning of Mark 6 we find that the disciples had been sent out in power, and where we read they are returning with zeal and energy in regard to all that they had done. "They related to him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught." The Lord Jesus would say, 'That is very blessed but I want you to come apart.' You or I might be occupied with service and with our work for the Lord but He would say in His tender affection for each one of us, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a little" (v 31).

In the desert there are no distractions, nothing but Himself. What a Person the Lord Jesus is. I trust that everyone here has been drawn to Him, has an appreciation of Him as their Saviour and Lord. What an object He is for our affections, and here He says, 'Come apart and rest awhile from your labours'. Perhaps service, which is legitimate, is taking too much of our attention, taking us away from the Saviour and from being occupied with Him.

Martha was occupied with service and the Lord said to her, "Mary has chosen the good part, the which shall not be taken from her". Mary was found there at the feet of Jesus; He was her object, the centre of her affections. There is not much in a desert but the Lord Jesus draws His own apart. This does not hinder the crowds coming to Him; they come and it says that the Lord Jesus was moved with compassion. The disciples would have sent them away. It is a challenge to us how we treat one another. The Lord in His tenderness was moved with compassion seeing them as sheep without a shepherd.

All these various features of Christ are to come out in us. We are to learn from them. There is One who is toward us, who loves us, in shepherd care, affection and compassion. Jeremiah tells us that His "compassions are new every morning". There is no lack; there is freshness for every day from God's side.

We are told here that persons came out from all the villages and the Lord taught them: then it comes to the evening and the disciples would disperse the crowd. "Send them away", they say, "that they may go into the country and villages around, and buy themselves bread, for they have not anything they can eat". But Jesus answers them, "Give ye" (an emphatic 'ye') "Give ye them to eat". The challenge of this is to come right down to our day. What have we got that we can share together to build up and encourage one another?

The Lord says, "Give ye them to eat". Have we got anything? Peter in the beginning of the Acts says, "Silver and gold I have not; but what I have, this give I to thee". We may say we have not got very much, but in the hands of the Saviour it is expanded. His hands bring in care and affection. These are hands which can minister to every living thing. What a challenge to our affections. Have we anything to give? Have we anything to share when we come together, or as we meet one another individually? He is the bread of life, One we can constantly feed upon; there is no lack from the divine side.

Outwardly what was available was small—five loaves and two fishes, brought by a little boy. You say, 'What is that?' Let us bring it to the Lord's hands. If you have an impression of Christ bring it into circulation, so that all can get the benefit of it, and it can be used to feed God's people. It is a challenge to us: what have we got?

The Lord is saying to us tonight, what have we got of Himself to pass on to one another? Something of Himself, something of the glorified Man, the lowly Man, the Man of Sychar's well, the Man of Calvary, the Man who has been into death but has passed through the heavens, a Prince and a Saviour—have we got anything of that character to feed and to build up one another? It is a challenge to my heart; let it be a challenge to each one of us, because it comes from the mouth of the Saviour in affection and love for us. He does not want us to be static. Have we learnt anything more of Himself, have we grown this year? It says of Samuel that his mother brought him a new coat every year; there was growth in evidence. It is important that we grow physically but we have to grow in the knowledge of divine things; that is what is going through. This world is about to pass away and only the work of God will go through.

When we come to the passage we read in John 13, it is a very searching scripture. The feast of Passover was about to take place and the Lord Jesus is amongst His own, this circle which was so close to Him for three and a half years. There is a solemn side, too, of the work of the devil in the treachery that was there in the betrayer. Let us contemplate that for a moment; it brings out the unscrupulous character of the enemy and where he will seek entrance in his effort to break up what is of Christ and of God. The devil entered into Judas. The Lord Jesus had chosen him and He knew what his heart was capable of but in faithfulness and wonderful love He went on with him all these years, and it came to this moment of betrayal.

“Jesus, knowing that his hour was come”. He knew everything: He knew the end from the beginning, knew that He was to be the sin-bearer. We are told elsewhere that men could not take Him for His hour was not yet come. Now, where we read it tells us that His “hour had come that he should depart out of this world to the Father”. Then it says, “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands”. Think of the greatness of the love of the Father for the Son; the Father has given all things into the hands of the Son—what a triumph!

The Lord rises from supper and lays aside His garments, putting aside all that was official. Think of Jesus doing this, then pouring water into the wash-hand basin, and stooping to wash His disciples’ feet. Picture it; think of the Lord of life and glory in His movements of humility here; He took a linen towel and girded Himself, then began to wash the feet of the disciples and wipe them with the linen towel. What humility; it was the place of a slave, of a servant, in these eastern parts at that time.

The Lord goes round them all and then in the final verse we read says, “for I have given you an example that, as I have done to you, ye should do also”. What a challenge to our hearts to think of the movements of Jesus in this way. He knew that this service was necessary in a world polluted with sin, where we pick up various things even unconsciously. Feet washing is necessary so that we should have part with Himself. Do we want to have part with Jesus? Then we need feet washing. There is nothing about the blood in this chapter; it is the water of purification in view of us having part with Himself.

To follow His example we too have to stoop; that may be the stumbling block with us. If we love one another we will be ready to do so. Can we approach in all the grace of the Saviour, to refresh, encourage and set one another forward? What an occupation this is, what a service.

Feet washing leads to our having part with Christ. Do we want to have part with Him, and be refreshed and maintained in vitality and love for one another? Let us wash one another's feet, not serving in any official way but prepared to go down in humility. This is what He began to do and to teach. The Lord is not telling us to do something He has not done Himself. He gives us an example in a scene of hostility, for the enemy was about to invade this precious circle and the Lord did it as recognising that it was necessary for us now.

When we come to Luke's gospel the Lord has been into death and has broken the power of death and of the grave. These two going to Emmaüs were going away from God's centre; they were downcast, disillusioned perhaps by all that had taken place. They are moving away but in His tender love as a glorious risen Man the Lord draws near and goes with them. He does not say, 'Why are you going away from Jerusalem?' Love does not operate like that. It says: "He drew near and went with them". He listens to their conversation; He has an interest in them. This glorious Person who has been into death and has risen again has an interest in each one of us because He loves us. We know that He loves us because He has given His life for us. Precious Saviour!

He listens to their conversation; how patient He is. He is the Man of patience, still waiting the Father's time to come to take His church to be with Himself for ever. As they walk these two tell Him what has taken place in Jerusalem. They speak of Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in deed and they tell of His rising. Then as we go on in the chapter the Lord says: "O senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" It was a necessity of divine love, if man was to be brought back to God, for this glorious Man to go into death and come out triumphant. How slow we may be at times to believe.

The journey from Jerusalem to Emmaüs became a journey from Genesis to Malachi as the Lord unfolded to them all that the prophets had said. How He would have spoken of the passover lamb in Exodus 12! He would have spoken of

Isaiah 42 and 53 bringing out the preciousness of Himself and all that He had to endure. What a journey it must have been. When they came to their house we are told, "he made as though he would go farther". This is the One that would stir our affections afresh tonight. We get tired; we say we have had enough and have gone far enough. This Person is not only the One who would draw near, go with them, and listen to them, but it says He interpreted in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself. There is clarity from this glorious Person, so that we will not be mistaken in any way, regarding His movements, as to who He is, where He has been and all He has done for God. He is sufficient in Himself to secure us eternally.

When they come to their house we are told, "he made as though he would go farther". The Lord would go on: He will never impose Himself upon us. He loves us with a love that is without measure but He will never impose Himself upon us. He has taken up a position in love; it says in Revelation, "Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking". He waits for that movement from our side to open the door to Him. So it says here, "they constrained him".

I wonder if this is our portion, that as we get a touch from the Lord our hearts begin to burn within us. They came into the house and He broke the bread and their eyes were opened and they recognised Him but He disappeared from them. It is a wonderful matter to get something from this glorious risen Man. As a result of this experience they get life and energy. Before they recognised Him it was too late to go farther; they had no energy but now they go back those seven miles that very night. They are brought again into the circle where Christ was honoured and loved. What a story they had to tell as they went back into Jerusalem and unfolded the preciousness of that glorious Person who had walked all those miles with them. What a Saviour, what a Lord He is.

I trust we will be encouraged in these things in which the Lord has given the example. The Lord is the great Leader and Completer of faith. He has set everything on. May we be encouraged for His name's sake.

James Buchanan

Address at Portknockie, 9th November, 1996

THE THRONE OF GRACE

When Hannah, pressed with grief,
Poured forth her soul in prayer,
She quickly found relief
And left her burden there.
Like her, in every trying case
Let us approach the throne of grace.

When she began to pray
Her heart was pained and sad,
But ere she went away
Was comforted and glad.
In trouble, what a resting place
Have they who know the throne of grace!

Though men and devils rage
And threaten to devour,
The saints from age to age
Are safe from all their power.
Fresh strength they gain to run their race,
By waiting at the throne of grace.

Eli her case mistook;
How was her spirit moved
By his unkind rebuke?
But God her cause approved.
We need not fear a creature's face
While welcome at the throne of grace.

She was not filled with wine,
As Eli rashly thought,
But with a faith divine
And found the help she sought.
Though men despise and call us base
Still let us ply the throne of grace.

Men have not power or skill
With troubled souls to bear;
Though they express good will
Poor comforters they are.
But swelling sorrows sink apace
When we approach the throne of grace.

Many before have tried
And found the promise true;
Not one has been denied,
Then why should I or you?
Let us by faith their footsteps trace
And hasten to the throne of grace.

As fogs obscure the light
And taint the morning air
But soon are put to flight
If the bright sun appear,
Thus Jesus will our troubles chase
By shining from the throne of grace.

John Newton (1725 - 1807)

TRUE AND FALSE ZEAL

Zeal is that pure and heavenly flame
The fire of love, supplies,
While that which often bears its name
Is self in a disguise.

True zeal is merciful and mild,
Can pity and forbear;
The false is headstrong, fierce and wild,
And breathes revenge and war.

While zeal for truth the christian warms,
He knows the worth of peace;
But self contends for names and forms,
Its party to increase.

Zeal has attained its highest aim,
Its end is satisfied,
If sinners love the Saviour's Name
Nor seeks it ought beside.

But self, however well employed,
Has its own ends in view
And says, as boasting, Jehu cried,
'Come see what I can do'.

Self may its poor reward obtain
And be applauded here,
But zeal the best applause will gain
When Jesus shall appear.

Dear Lord, the idol self dethrone
And from our hearts remove,
And let no zeal by us be shown
But that which springs from love.

John Newton (1725 - 1807)

I WANT TO BE FREE

The great longing of the human heart is for freedom,—
freedom to do what we want,
to be our own master and do our own thing.

We are irked because our freedom is limited.—
We may be free to go to late-night parties,
to drink or to experiment with drugs.

We may be free to pursue our ambitions, pleasures and lusts. But we are
not free to avoid the consequences—
the headaches,
the heartaches,
the painful memories.

The Bible is true. —Be sure your sin will find you out!

There was a young man once who wanted his freedom. His father made
over to him his share of the family property and with money enough and to
spare he was off to build a new life of his own—a life where he could do
what he wanted. With his money he found friends, food, and fun, but the
fun soon turned to frivolity and then to debauchery. After a while the
money was gone, the carefree days were over. He had spent all and he was
not satisfied. He had listened to all the solutions to life's problems pro-
posed by his companions and they left him with a hunger unfulfilled and a
want unmet.

With his life in ruins he began to think of his father and the home he had
left. One day he decided to go home and tell his father what a mess he had
made of things and that he was not even worthy to be called his son any
more.

Does the story have a familiar ring?

Yes, you have heard it before somewhere!

Sometimes we call it the story of the prodigal son.

A story Jesus told to show that however far we may have got away from
God, there is a way back.

We may have thrown away the resources God has given us:
our abilities,
our health,
our strength,
our intellect.

Our blood may have tingled when we set out to do our own thing, but the end has been a harvest of bitter memories, broken hopes, and soured relationships. But in the hunger and want that is left God would show us that He is willing and eager to forgive us and give us real freedom, joy and peace.

He sees your great need and in His great love He has sent His own Son to meet it.

Jesus came to bring freedom from the tyranny of sin,
from the bitterness of remorse,
from the fear of death,
from the power of the devil.

Jesus suffered on the cross the Just for the unjust. Jesus came to bring us the knowledge of the love of God:—

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Will you believe?

Will you turn from the empty want in your own heart and say in the words of the hymn:—

*‘Out of my sin and sorrow and self
Jesus I come to Thee’.*

(Copies of this article in tract form are available free from the Editor.)

SIX THINGS IN THE DAILY LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN - PART 3

Daily Prayer

“I cry unto thee daily” (Psalm 86:3)

I wish to remind you of the great importance of daily prayer. I have purposely left the subject of prayer until I had said a little about the affections of the heart being after Christ, because nothing will be more changed than your prayers if you are really after Christ. If Christ is before our hearts we feel the hindrances and the difficulties, and we understand the need for prayer in a very different way from one who has not Christ as his object.

There never was upon the earth a man who was so continually in the spirit of prayer as the blessed Lord, for there never was one whose heart was so devoted to God. It was the very excellence of His devotedness to God that made Him so entirely dependent — so pre-eminently the Man of prayer. The more our hearts are set upon Christ in glory, and the more we are devoted to His interests here, the more do we feel our weakness and dependence. We feel that everything here is against us; we are conscious of the opposition around and within, and we become more and more men of prayer. I think you will allow that the apostle Paul excelled all other saints in devotedness to Christ, and there never was one so saturated with the spirit of prayer. I am sure of this, that if our hearts are set upon Christ in glory the effect will be that we shall be much on our knees.

Allow me to give you a few practical words as to your prayers. Keep clear of the unprofitable habit of ‘saying your prayers’. Christendom is full of solemn warnings as to the tendency of our hearts to drop into a routine of religious forms. It is a very great loss to the soul to get into the habit of repeating substantially the same words in prayer every day. It is not real prayer at all. We read, “In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God” Philippians 4:6.

How can you do that if you are using the same form of words day after day and week after week? To-day is not like yesterday, and to-morrow will not be like to-day. If you are really with God you will be sensitive to the fresh needs of every day. God delights to have our confidence as to every need and care. Then let us cultivate a child’s confidence and a child’s simplicity as we come to Him in prayer. Bring the trying circumstances of to-day and the expected difficulties and perplexities of to-morrow to the blessed God who tells you to cast all your care upon Him for He careth for you. Be simple: give up the long preface: do not feel it necessary to quote a dozen scriptures: ask as a needy and confiding child would ask its parent.

If I might venture to say one word about the prayer-meeting it would be this: I do not believe any one should take part unless he has some definite petition to present. I have been in prayer-meetings where I have felt as if some began without knowing a single thing they were going to ask for, and discoursed about every subject that happened to come into their minds. This may be a profitable religious exercise, but it is certainly not prayer.

Then if we are really set for Christ, as I said before, we realise our dependence in a deeper way, because our faith connects the glory of His name with everything in our daily life, and we become sensible that it is only as we are maintained by divine power that we can be for Him here. Such a one has many an exercise that others miss who are less devoted, but he enjoys oftentimes the deep blessedness of communion with God while they are living and walking "as men". The more your heart is set for Christ, the more you will be characterised by humility and dependence, which will find their expression in daily prayer.

C. A. Coates

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

CHRIST THE BEARER

The Bearer of our Sins

"Who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree," (1 Peter 2:24)

I begin with this word in Peter. Peter's soul would have been moved to the depths as he wrote these words. Into his exhortation to the saints as to how they should behave he brings in his impression of the way that Jesus behaved when He was here in circumstances of trial. In order to convey something of the glory and love of this Person that was filling Peter's soul he writes these remarkable words, "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree".

We are all very fickle in our estimate of what sin and sins really are. We treat of things so trivially. In speaking of 'sins' we speak of the acts that have been done, of which we are all guilty. It seems to come so easily to us to be perverse. Children do not need to be told to rebel and stamp their feet. It needs very little age before the inherent will to disobey comes out and that is the early beginnings of the workings of sin which lead to sinful actions.

Sin is the root of the matter, but sins are the acts performed and as to which we are accountable to God. Sins are against God, so that children who rebel and sin against their parents are by enlargement sinning against God, because they are sinning against God's authority vested in the parents. Those who rebel against the authorities that have been set up by God are not only rebelling and sinning against authority but they are sinning against God.

So that this idea of committing sins, which is common to all of us, is a very serious matter to face. We have all been involved in this. Those of us who have received the testimony about the Saviour come into the forgiveness of sins but we are likely to do that in a very light hearted sort of way, without understanding what was involved in the matter.

I would that I could convey something of the gravity of sin in the sight of God. One sin involved the exclusion of our first parents from the earthly paradise, "by the disobedience of the one man the many have been constituted sinners" (Romans 5:19). Sin entered into the world and death passed upon all men, in that all have sinned. That is, it has come out into effect. I believe that if we really understood a little more deeply what was involved in Jesus bearing our sins we would understand more fully the wonder of the love that moved Him to be the sinbearer.

The dearth on our side of an appreciation of how much we have been forgiven, how much it cost the Saviour that we might be forgiven, lies at the root of lack of love for Jesus. If we are dealing with the matter of sins in a very casual way, our love for Jesus will be very careless. I can understand why Paul loved Christ so much. Paul spoke of himself as being the chief of sinners; he had some sense of the enormity of what he had done. There are big sins and small sins in our eyes but all sins are heinous in the sight of God.

We find in Exodus and Leviticus, in the giving of God's law to His people, some idea of the way that God deals with matters of transgression. In the book of Exodus we have very much what happens between one person and another. Let no one run away with the idea that God will overlook what happens between brethren. We cannot treat God's people in an off-hand way nor can we deal with our fellow men in such a way as to misrepresent God.

God does not gloss things over. In the book of Exodus we have quite a sizeable part of a chapter dealing with the way that responsibility and guilt are to be

apportioned if a man's ox gores someone. There were certain responsibilities on the owner. If the ox had gored before, and witness has been born that he had gored before, there is an increase in responsibility on the owner. If the ox gores a son or a daughter there is an assessed responsibility. If it gores a handmaid or a bondman there is another kind of responsibility; if the ox gores somebody else's ox there is another kind of responsibility. Every responsibility between persons as to the assessment of wrong is thoroughly set out.

I only say this because God does not deal with things en masse. God deals with them in detail. We are told in Hebrews as to the law that "every transgression and disobedience received just retribution" (Hebrews 2:2). Punishment was allotted accurately according to the guilt. Often in the book of Exodus we have these scenes of failure towards our brethren. If persons put into my care something to look after, whatever happens while it is in my custody, especially if it goes astray, is my responsibility and recompense has to be made. I mention this that we might see that even in what we may speak of as the trivial matters of life God assesses us in responsibility and in our failures.

Then in the book of Leviticus failure in relation to God is dealt with. There are sins of inadvertence, sins of the whole assembly, sins of the priest, sins of a prince, the sins of the common people; they are all assessed accurately by God according to the gravity, the light, responsibility and dignity of the person and restitution has to be made in respect of those sins. The kinds of offering, the value of the offerings and what accompanied them is all assessed according to the responsibility of the person. God is pointing with a very long finger to the cross. God is pointing on, from that day, to the way that these things must be dealt with in the light of Christ's work upon the cross.

In the present time there are things that point backwards to the cross; in the days of the Old Testament things pointed on to the cross and every one of our sins, what we may think of as being big or small sins, perhaps even sins of no account, they are all assessed by God. Every one has had to have, if we are going to be blessed, a just punishment from the hand of God and that punishment was meted out on Jesus. He "bore our sins in his body on the tree". It is most affecting to think of it. I could not explain what entered into those three hours of darkness at Calvary. I could not explain, save as the types in the Old Testament seek to bring it home to us, the dreadfulness and cost to the Saviour of the dealing with matters of sin.

The sacrifices in the Old Testament, particularly on the day of atonement, are intended to show us something of what came upon Jesus. You will remember that in the sin offering Aaron leaned with his hand on the head of the ox. It was not just a casual drooping of his hand; it was putting the whole weight of himself as representing the nation and he confessed the national sins of Israel over the head of the beast. They were transferred from Israel on to the beast. That beast not only had to die, not only had its blood to be shed, but the creature had to be burned outside the camp in the place where men poured out the ashes. It is the picture of the awfulness of the transaction of what took place upon the cross when Jesus bore our sins in His body on the tree.

We are told in the gospels that when they were about to crucify Jesus they offered Him wine mingled with myrrh (Mark 15:23). It is like giving a kind of anaesthetic that would have made Jesus unconscious or at least stupefied when He was on the cross but He rejected it. Jesus went into the suffering for sins upon the cross with all His holy sensibilities alert as He would accept from the hand of God the punishment of our sins in His body on the tree.

We have all contributed to the sufferings of Jesus. That is my link with the cross, that I have contributed to the sufferings of Christ. It was not an artificial matter for Jesus: He bore it as Man; He bore our sins in His body on the tree. Oh what a link should be formed between our souls and Him. Shame on us that we should ever lose our ardent love for the One who in love for us bore our sins in His body on the tree.

Do you feel how indebted you are to Jesus? Not one of those sins that He bore had He committed. We are the ones who commit sins, but God having foreknowledge of them laid them all upon Jesus. It is a great comfort that as the hymn says:

*'My sins, not in part, but the whole,
were borne on the cross and are gone ever more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul.'*

The world would water this down and dull our sensibilities. If we really understood what Christ bore for us how glad we should be to bear something of His reproach in this world. The power to stand in the conflict like the martyrs of old was the power that came from Christ at the right hand of God but on their side

there was a burning love for the One who had borne their sins in His body on the tree.

May the Lord deepen our appreciation of the gravity of sin so that we never turn back to it. May we not be like those who are said to have forgotten the purging of their former sins but may it be with us constantly, all the way through.

Someone was recently asking about the use of the word 'tree' in this connection. When speaking to the Jews about the cross the word 'tree' is used because it would ring a bell in the Jewish mind. When speaking to the Gentile the word 'cross' is used because it would ring a bell in the Gentile mind. In this town in the days of the Romans you would not have to go very far before you saw a cross at a junction of the road. The cross in the eyes of the Gentiles meant that the Romans decreed that He was not fit to live. With the Jews they would understand that in God's sight what is hung on a tree is a curse because it is abhorrent in His sight. Jesus went into that for us and in the doing of it He has shown His love for us in order that He might kindle in our hearts love for Himself and that we might be worthy representatives of Him during His absence.

Think of meeting Jesus at the judgement seat. Think of Him saying, 'I bore your sins in my body on the tree and I gave you the opportunity of being a witness for me and you did not take it'. Think of the Lord having to say that to us. There is no condemnation at the judgement seat because we shall be in conditions of glory, but if we waste our days, if we fritter them away, the Lord will have to say to us. Think of meeting Him eye to eye, the One who suffered so much for us, and we have not been prepared to commit ourselves, with the help of the Spirit, to be a witness to Him during the days of His absence.

The Bearer of our infirmities

"Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases". (Matthew 8:17)

In Matthew 8 the Lord is not bearing sins, but bearing infirmities and sicknesses. I am not going to turn this address into faith healing but I believe it is a matter we need to keep in perspective. We are thankful to God for every help that we get in the way of physicians; in the ways of God they alleviate present circumstances. But I do say, let us look beyond the tablets and the palliatives to see the fact that the Lord is concerned about our bodies.

We are very fortunate if on the National Health we have got a sympathetic doctor. It is something in the ways of God for our good. But, even in regard of our bodies, let us keep the Lord in view. I say to young people that you are living in days of great wickedness. Persons are using their bodies in a most abominable way: fornication, drug taking and the like. It is all a corruption of men in their use of their bodies.

There is a large section in first Corinthians which speaks of the way that believers ought to use their bodies. The bodies of believers are even said to be the members of Christ. That is the real thought of the body; it is not an artificial ideal or something just held in the mind. Our bodies are necessary for the practical expression of the truth of the body. And Paul warns us that "the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Corinthians 6:13). The two thoughts are brought together, that we are members of Christ and the way in which the body is to be used. The Lord not only claims our souls and spirits; He claims our bodies.

We use our bodies to commit sins. We have used them to dishonour the name of God but now, as believers, we are to use our bodies for the Lord. He feels every sickness and every disease that comes upon His people. Use the doctor by all means but let us keep the Lord in view; He is concerned about our bodies. What are we doing with them? Think of the wicked and cruel things that have been done in the use of the tongue.

The Lord used His body to commend the name and the grace of God. In Matthew 5 the Lord Jesus comes down from the mountain where He has given His legislation and the first thing He is recorded as doing is to use His hands and heal a leper. He handled him freely. He could have spoken a word and healed him but He gave an impression by the hand. Oh, it is a grand thing to get a touch from Christ.

His bearing our sicknesses is different from His bearing our sins but it is especially a part of His service towards us. As we use our bodies in relation to the testimony we will find the Lord will be for our bodies to help us in our responsibilities and in keeping things going in the christian company so that there is an actual physical representation of persons being together in the light of the church. It is seen in the bodies of the saints as we are together; the Lord is for the body.

The Bearer of His own

“Ye have seen what I have done to the Egyptians and how I have borne you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself”

(Exodus 19:4)

“...and Aaron shall bear their names before Jehovah upon his two shoulders for a memorial”

(Exodus 28:12)

“And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart”

(Exodus 28:29)

In Exodus 19 Christ in type is shown as bearing persons.

The Israelites had been in the wilderness only a short time. They are like young believers who have just been converted; they find themselves in another order of things altogether from what they have been in and God gives them this special word through Moses: “Ye have seen what I have done to the Egyptians”.

God showed Himself mighty on their behalf. Where has He done that for us? He has done it at the cross and He has done it at the grave. The Red Sea was not only a figure of the death of Jesus; it was a figure of the burial of Jesus too. “We have been buried therefore with him by baptism unto death” (Romans 6:4). The power of the devil was overthrown in the death and burial of Jesus. All that would hold us in the bondage of sin has been overthrown. “Ye have seen what I have done to the Egyptians”.

Then it goes on “and how I have borne you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself” I am impressed with this. We get the eagle and its wings in Exodus 19 at the beginning of the wilderness journey and we find it again in Deuteronomy 32 at the end of the wilderness journey when the eagle is said to stir up the nest. Now the eagle is different from most birds in its care of its young. It builds its nest on an eyrie, right up on the crest of a rock; year after year the nest gets bigger. The bottom of the nest is full of cruel thorns; on top of that is put moss, wool from lambs and often feathers from the mother bird. It is made very comfortable for the young. The parents feed the young in the nest but when they get big and it is time they should use their wings the parents stir up the nest. All the soft bits are thrown out and the eaglets find that it is very uncomfortable. They scramble out onto the rocks and then the mother bird pushes them over the edge and they have got to use their wings. The mother flies down, catches them on

her back and takes them for a ride to the heights. It gets them accustomed to the heights and to being away from the nest.

And this is what has happened in recent years. The Lord has seen that it is time to stir up the nest so that young believers learn to use their wings, learn to walk in the Spirit. I believe the using of our wings involves our use of the Holy Spirit as power to fly in the heavenly realm.

“I have borne you on eagles’ wings”. How the Lord looks after young believers. He expects those who are older, like me, to use our wings. He is not going to abandon us. But, dear young ones, you can trust Him. Get out of the nest. Oh do not go into the world. Use your wings; use what Christ will give by His Spirit in christian responsibility. The whole idea is that God will bring us through to Himself.

The hymn says:

*‘In the desert God will teach thee,
What the God that thou hast found.’*

We rely so much on meetings and ministry; they are precious in their place but are not to be over-rated. Our real resource must be God alone. Do not depend on a servant. Value what he has got; take it as coming from Christ. God would have us for Himself. What a proposition. I know of no greater privilege than being entirely for God. The scripture I have read says: “Ye have seen what I have done to the Egyptians, and how I have borne you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself”, then He says, “if ye will hearken to my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then shall ye be my own possession out of all the peoples”. That covenant was never ratified in the palmy days of Israel. It waited until the book of Malachi for the feeble few who thought on His name (Malachi 3:16), who provided God with that which would be His own possession.

Those that think on His name today have their resource and hope in God and they are able to provide what is precious for God. That should be normal in the christian company. God intends to be near to His people in love. In the wilderness the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night were a visible evidence that God was amongst His people so that they might draw near to Him

and minister to Him in all the blessedness of acceptance as it could be known then. It is a figure of how things are today. We have to walk as kings and priests in the light of the house of God, in the light of the body of Christ, in the light of the church.

Now, to help us we have Christ as the great High Priest. Exodus 28 is the installation of the high priest. In those offices the office made the man. With Christ it is the Man that makes the office. All that Aaron wore was figurative of the beauties and glories of Jesus as our great High Priest. Every stitch, every colour, every little bit of gold, every precious stone, all refer to Christ and what the people of God are to Him. Christ is now installed as the Priest. He was morally a priest when He was here on the earth. He was not then officially installed but now He is at the right hand of God as the great sustainer of the people of God. He not only sustains us in our weaknesses, in our bodies, but He is the minister of the sanctuary, the sustainer of the service of God.

The great subject of the epistle to the Hebrews is the great high priest, the sustainer of the saints in relation to God. He bears the saints on His shoulder. These are not cut glass jewels on His shoulder; they are onyx stones, jewels formed under heat and pressure and mystery. I do not think that the people who burrow in the earth know a great deal as to how the gems got there. They conjecture that it is by means of heat and pressure and other things. Well, our formation as being precious to God has its history in the depths into which Jesus went. It has its origin in the pressure and suffering that Jesus underwent. That is where we start; we are precious to God as the fruit of what has come out of the sufferings of Christ.

Now these two beautiful gems on the shoulder of the High Priest have six names on the one and six names on the other. We may see this and that body of professing christians. I remember being in a street in Port Elizabeth where I think there were 165 religious denominations in one street! What confusion! But in the presence of God, on the shoulders of Christ, are two precious stones. There is a witness borne there by Jesus which never breaks down. The preciousness of the saints is sustained before God in all the glory of their acceptance in the Beloved, sustained there on His shoulders.

Then, on the breastplate of judgment, the stones are arranged according to divine direction. Here they are borne on the heart. Think of God looking at what Aaron bore. Think of Him seeing the scintillating gems on his shoulders and on his breast and the loving thoughts that would arise in the bosom of God as He thinks of His saints as precious and dear in His sight.

Let us keep these things in mind, dear brethren. If our bearing is broken down, the bearing of Christ has not broken down and what is borne in the sanctuary is what God is going to bring the saints to eventually. None of this conglomeration of breakdown is going into heaven. What is going into heaven is that which is the pure unsullied work of God! The names that were put on the breast plate and on the shoulders at the beginning of the wilderness journey were still there at the end. They are there with the work of an engraver. They do not rub off; they are there for ever and we are there for ever.

May we keep ourselves. Let us remember that in seeking to stand for the truth it should be done in the dignity of how we stand before God.

Then the high priest has on the priestly turban and it is inscribed: "Holiness to Jehovah". Do we not feel the shortcomings, the bunglings, that mark us in our response to God? When the order of the sacrifices was set out all had to be of a certain pure standard. I can understand a godly Israelite, as he went to his herds to bring an offering, feeling that they came short of the divine standard.

We feel that. When we pray and praise, what blemishes there are. But Christ is there to bear the iniquity of the sanctuary; the shortcomings of the offerings of believers are all met by Christ. You need not falter because you are bungling your prayer and you do not know enough. Christ will make your sincere offering acceptable with God so that God's service goes on even if we are in frail and failing conditions; Christ bears the iniquity of the sanctuary.

May the Lord stand to us more and more as the great bearer, the carrier of all that needs to be carried until we reach Him in the scene where carrying will all be over.

J. O. T. Darton

Shortened version of an address at Yeovil, 29th September, 1969.

WHAT DO I LEARN FROM SCRIPTURE? PART 3

I learn that this blessed one, the Lord Jesus Christ, died for all, has given Himself a ransom for all, testified in due time, (2 Corinthians 5:14, 1 Timothy 2:6,) that He has made propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

I learn that He has thereby obtained an eternal redemption, (Hebrews 9:12) and that by one offering of Himself once for all the sins of all that believe on Him are purged, (Hebrews 1:3, 9:22, 10:2) and that by faith in Him their consciences are also purged, (Hebrews 9:14, 10:2) and God remembers their sins and iniquities no more, (Hebrews 10:17) that called of God, they receive the promise of an eternal inheritance, (Hebrews 9:15) being perfected for ever, so that we have boldness to enter into the holiest by His blood, by the new and living way He has consecrated for us. (Hebrews 10:14, 19 & 20)

I learn that to enter into the Kingdom of God we must be born of water and the Spirit, born again, (John 3:3-5) being naturally dead in sins, and by nature children of wrath. (Ephesians 2:1-3, 2 Corinthians 5:14)

That which God employs in order to our being born again is His word, (James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23)

hence it is by faith that we become His children (Galatians 3:26)

I learn that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall have everlasting life, (John 3:16)

but that to this end, God being a righteous and holy God, the Son of man had to be lifted up upon the cross, (John 3:14-15)

that there He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, (1 Peter 1:24)

and was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

J. N. Darby