

Living Water

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.

"*Living Water*" is edited by Mark Lemon & published by Stone Publishing Trust (Registered Charity 1034689) 'The Eagles', Headcorn Road, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0BU

Correspondents in the UK are welcome to use the Freepost address:-

Stone Publishing Trust,
FREEPOST TN3448, Staplehurst, TONBRIDGE,
Kent, TN12 0BR

Quotations from the Bible given in "*Living Water*" are normally from the Darby translation or from the Authorised (King James) Version.

Articles are sometimes shortened or otherwise amended.

All articles are Copyright to the Stone Publishing Trust.

Printed by Christian Design and Print,
34, Prior's Way, Coggeshall, Essex, CO6 1TW, UK.

Living Water — Issue No 31

		Page
Recent Ministry		
REMEMBERING WHAT WE WERE	Billy Cowie	4
UNITY — HOW IT IS BROUGHT ABOUT AND MAINTAINED	Don Macphail	6

Poetry Selection

REST IN JESUS One of the earliest hymns in existence.	Stephen the Sabaite	14
PRAISE HIM EVERMORE	Richard Burnham	15
JESUS, HOW GLORIOUS IS THY GRACE!	Isaac Watts	16
THE COMING OF THE LORD	Philipp Nicolai	17

Testimony

GOSPEL TRUTH Extracts from the Chester local newspaper	Brian Parr	17
---	------------	----

A Voice From the Past

MARRIAGE IN THE LORD	J. O. T. Darton	19
EXTRACTS FROM 'STREAMS OF LIVING WATER' – PART 2 Divine Love Reaching us in Christ		22

A Word for Today

HOW SHOULD MAN BE JUST WITH GOD? Continuing the series of preachings from the Evangelical volumes of J. N. Darby.	J. N. Darby	24
---	-------------	----

REMEMBERING WHAT WE WERE

“Wherefore remember that ye, once nations in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that called circumcision in the flesh done with the hand; that ye were at that time without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who once were afar off are become nigh by the blood of the Christ” (Ephesians 2:11-13).

Paul in writing to the Ephesians brings before them in chapter 3 matters of the highest doctrine and teaching but in chapter 2 he is saying to them: ‘I want you to remember where you came from; I want you to remember just how far away from the blessing you were’. The older we get, and the more we see God’s ways with us, the more we learn our sinnership and wonder at the love that led the blessed God to reach out to us to bring us to Himself.

Remember that ye were at that time without Christ! That is the worst state that a person can be in. ‘Without Christ, having no hope, without God’. You could not be further from the blessing but now you who were so far away are brought nigh and the wonder of it is that we have become nigh by the blood of the Christ. God gave His Son, His well-beloved Son, to bring us back to Himself.

In the Old Testament God reminded His people, Israel, that they had been bondmen in Egypt. They were not to forget it and they were to remember, too, how they had been rescued. Have we forgotten, perhaps, how we have been delivered? Is there a lack of appreciation of the redeeming love of God? That is what we have in this chapter of Ephesians. We have been brought nigh, brought back, brought near, brought right into the presence of the holy God by the blood of Jesus.

This section dwells on the wonder of the death of Christ. Who can fathom it? What actually took place in that death? The hymn says:

‘In that death all love was centred,
O the depths of love divine!’

That is one aspect of it. Yet here in Ephesians Paul is opening up certain things that happened. It says: “He...has broken down the middle wall of enclosure”

(verse 14). Do you remember the Berlin wall? Who would have thought that could be taken down? Do you remember those pictures of people who were chipping away, a brick at a time? When Jesus died it was not a brick at a time! It was demolition! He has broken down the great divide between Jew and Gentile, gone for ever, "that he might form the two in himself into one new man". That is one outcome of His death. The scripture goes on, "having by it slain the enmity". If we looked at the cross what would we see? A Man that was slain, the appearance of utter weakness. Oh, what a death! Yet in that dying He brought down the middle wall of enclosure and He has slain the enmity that was between Jew and Gentile that He might bring both into one new man into the presence of God Himself. What a wonder!

Are you thankful? Are you thankful that you are a believer on the Lord Jesus? Are you truly thankful that He shed His blood? Have you thanked Him for washing you from your sins? Or have you forgotten?

Are you filled with wonder? Oh, you will never exhaust the fulness of it. God loved us and gave His Son for us to bring us back to Himself. We did not have Christ, we did not have God, we did not have peace; we had none of these things. Now we have them all! Oh it is a wonder. Remember it!

"Making peace". The whole world is crying out for peace: the Middle East, Bosnia, Ireland. Oh, if we could only have peace. Have you got peace? Are you enjoying peace? Have you thanked God for the peace that has been made? "Having made peace by the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20). Wonder of wonders, He has made peace! He was made sin. In one way that is the greatest wonder of all. God did that so that we might become "God's righteousness in Him". If scripture did not tell me that, I could not accept it. It is one of the great wonders of the ways of God that He has taken to justify us, free from all our vile sins, and made us contributors in His house.

Then it says of Jesus, "and, coming" (verse 17). It has been pointed out that the word "coming" infers 'coming out of death'. When He came to seek and to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel He did not come to those who were afar off. No! He came with this specific mission to Israel and largely His ministry was bounded by the borders of that country. But as risen and ascended the preaching of the glad tidings of peace was to go far and wide.

He has made peace and He wants men to enter in to the joy and certainty and surety of that peace—the glad tidings of peace to all. There is not one gospel for Jews and one for Gentiles—no, only one gospel: “the power of God through faith for salvation” (1 Peter 1:5)

If ever there was a Jew steeped in the Jewish religion it was Paul. But what a view he gained of the work of Christ and what He had accomplished and what He had brought again to God: “For through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father”. We can go right into the Father’s presence. We can say to Him every day, ‘Father’. He listens to us. He loves to hear us calling Him Father. By the Spirit we cry “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6). We have been brought into the family of God so that we can say, ‘Father’.

We are sons of God (Romans 8:14) on the basis of the death of Jesus. That is the way God has taken to bring us back to Himself. God wants to dwell with us. We did not know Him—we were afar off—but He wants to dwell with us and to bless us.

Remember these words: “In whom”. It is all in a Person, the Lord Jesus. Everything revolves around Him. “In whom ye also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit”.

The death of Jesus is marvellous. We cannot fathom the extent of it. The accomplishment of redemption was fulfilling the purpose of God, pre-determined before time began.

Billy Cowie

Extract from an address, Sevenoaks, 20th September 1997

“He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory”

1 Samuel 2:8

UNITY -- HOW IT IS BROUGHT ABOUT AND MAINTAINED

Psalm 132: 1-10, 13-16;

Psalm 133: 1-3;

Psalm 134: 1-3

Ephesians 4: 1-3, 13.

There are only three direct references in scripture to unity. In Psalm 133 it is brethren dwelling together in unity and then in Ephesians, it is unity of the Spirit and unity of the faith. How precious it is where there is unity amongst christians. The questions are how is it arrived at and how is it maintained?

We should exercise our souls in relation to that and it begins with the individual. Psalm 132 reads, "I will not come into the tent of my house, I will not go up to the couch of my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, slumber to mine eyelids". The writer was concerned to find a habitation for God. We should all be concerned that in this scene, which is marked by sin and departure from God, there should be a place for His habitation.

The writer of this Psalm was concerned that there might be a place where God could dwell. Are you concerned about that? Are my activities like the writer of this Psalm, who had this so much before his soul that he would not even to go to his own house, or go up to the couch of his bed, until he found what was missing, that God might have His rest. What was missing? The ark of God was missing. The ark typifies our Lord Jesus Christ, the One in whom all the thoughts and purposes of God are carried through.

I suppose when David wrote this Psalm he was recalling his experiences, how he found the ark in the house of Abinadab on the hill where it had been put after it had been taken captive by the Philistines. Seven months after the Philistines captured the ark, they returned it to the borders of Israel to Beth-Shemesh. God smote the men of Beth-Shemesh because they had looked into the ark. We need to be careful not to look into the ark. The ark speaks of Christ in His humanity (the acacia wood) and in His divinity seen in the gold. We must be careful in the presence of the true ark of God, Christ, to revere the greatness and glory of His Person and not attempt to reduce Him to the level of human thinking.

While the ark was in the house of Abinadab on the hill there were no sacrifices according to the divine order. The time was long and how God felt it. The ark, while not in the hand of the Philistines, was not in its proper place either. What of our day? We may have some appreciation of Christ, but is He in His proper place, in the place where God would have Him as the centre of the divine system? The whole tabernacle system in the wilderness was centred round the ark. Christ is the centre of all God's thoughts and purposes, the centre of God's universe, and He will soon be displayed as such. While the ark was in the house of Abinadab that was not so.

So David was searching for the ark. How long was it since it had returned from the Philistines? As far as I can ascertain it was about 70 years! It was there all through the reign of Saul and David was 40 years old, or thereabouts, when he brought it up out of the house of Abinadab and took it aside into the house of Obed Edom. There it was cherished and God blessed the house of Obed Edom. So it is not only a matter of individual concern but God will bless the houses of the saints as Christ is cherished there. There may be concerns, there may be sorrows, but if Christ is there then there will be blessing. Finally the ark was brought up into Zion, into the tent that David spread for it. It was there as the centre of blessing for God and the people.

Now, are you concerned about our Lord Jesus? David the king was not an old man when he brought up the ark. He had heard of it at Ephratah, at Bethlehem-Judah. David says, "we found it in the fields of the wood", as if it was in a position where it was not cared for. Where is the Lord Jesus cherished today? As far as the public position is concerned, the ark typically today may be in the fields of the wood. Verse 9 says, "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints shout for joy. For thy servant David's sake...". Think of the priests being clothed with righteousness. Now God does that in our day; He clothes His priests with righteousness—that is, not their own righteousness but the righteousness of another.

Then, "Let thy saints shout for joy". Oh, that there might be more expressions of joy amongst believers. We have much to be joyful about. There are terrible sorrows in the testimony certainly, but soon Jesus is actually coming into His place, firstly coming into the air to receive us to Himself, then coming to take His rightful place in this scene. Is that not a matter of joy?

Not one of us merits the blessing that God gives. The older we get the more we realise that it is all of God Himself, all of His grace. No wonder the saints can shout for joy. God says, "I will abundantly bless her provision". Think of it, a place where there are no shortages, where God has provided everything. If there is a need, God will meet it. How does He meet it? He meets it in Christ.

He says, "I will abundantly bless". In this world there are places where there is abundance of food while in other parts there are great shortages. That is not God's way. We are waiting for the day when the Lord comes to reign for He will set these things right but, spiritually, the divine system is full and overflowing and it is all under the administration of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 16 says, "And I will clothe her priests" not here with righteousness but "with salvation". That would include righteousness but I think it goes further. Salvation would include the redemption of the body. Think of the weaknesses of the saints, many suffering in their bodies. The great work of redemption means that these bodies are going to be changed. Then does it say, 'And her saints shall shout for joy'? No, "shout aloud for joy". There is an excess in what God is going to bring about. God is making promises and these promises are in excess of David's request. The promise is: "There will I cause the horn of David to bud forth"—that is, Christ becoming supreme in power.

So, these are the things that lead to unity. It is found where Christ has His rightful place, where there is a habitation for God and where God commands the blessing, life for evermore. Psalm 133 reads, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" The point is how good it is in the sight of God when brethren dwell together in unity. Why should it be otherwise when all are clothed with salvation and there is a full supply in God's domain? Why should there be anything but unity?

Now we are given are two similes. Firstly there is the precious oil on the head. Whose head? The head of Christ! We know how oil flows, causing liberty of movement. It speaks to us of the blessed Holy Spirit and what would flow in His power from the Head in heaven. It then says, "that ran down upon the beard, upon Aaron's beard". This suggests the priesthood of Christ. If Psalm 132 is the place of the king, Psalm 133 speaks of priestly power flowing from Christ as our great High Priest. So the Lord Jesus would operate in priestly grace to maintain

unity amongst the saints, in view of God commanding the blessing, "life for evermore".

God cannot find His habitation where there is disunity. It is entirely against the divine idea. The enmity has been slain in the death of Christ (Ephesians 2:16). Why should the first order of man be revived? Christ the High Priest is available and there is the flow of the Spirit. If there are problems or difficulties surely the oil would bring about healing under the hand of Christ. It was useful when He came as the Samaritan on the Jericho road; surely the oil is useful now amongst believers.

The Psalm refers to the beard twice. The beard would suggest manhood (there is a need for spiritual manhood at the present time) and dignity. The oil continues down to the hem of the garment. Around the hem of the High Priest's garments as described in the Old Testament were the bells and pomegranates. The pomegranates suggest the saints set together and the bells gave the sound of Aaron's movements. As the oil goes right down to the hem of the garment so the Spirit would help us in relation to our movements through this scene. There should be a priestly character with us. This is a result of what flows down from the Head Himself in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then there is a second simile. The "dew of Hermon that descendeth on the mountains of Zion; for there hath Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for evermore". The top of Hermon, I understand, is usually in the clouds. I believe that this typifies for us the heavenly realm. It would suggest what comes down from Christ Himself in that heavenly realm. Dew would speak of refreshment for the saints. Here it comes down on the mountains of Zion, not just on Mount Zion (the mountain of stability and grace) but on the mountains of Zion. I think it should remind us of all the grace experienced by the saints in their various localities. We should all be experiencing divine grace, refreshment, and blessing in our localities. Then unity will be maintained and God will find His place of habitation where "Jehovah commanded the blessing, life for evermore".

Flowing out of that in Psalm 134 is praise to God. "Behold, bless Jehovah, all ye servants of Jehovah, who by night stand in the house of Jehovah". We are really in the night season of Christ's rejection. The day of the Lord's public glory is coming soon but we are in the night season and yet the exhortation here is to

praise God. This is the outcome of Christ being magnified amongst those that love Him, brethren dwelling together in unity and the enjoyment of the blessings which come down from above.

Even in adverse conditions, night conditions, praise is to be continued. The day star has already risen in the hearts of believers. The night season has not yet ended but that does not mean that the praises of God should cease. Let us be found standing in the house of God in the night season offering praises to God. Then we find that God, the maker of the heavens and the earth, will bless us out of Zion.

In Ephesians Paul, writing from prison, exhorts the saints to walk worthy of the calling wherewith they have been called. What is the calling? It is what God has called us into. It is a wonderful pathway of privilege and blessing which leads to glory. Paul reminds us that we are to walk, "with all lowliness". Think of the lowliness of Jesus, the One who set this pathway on. How far do we express it? We live in a day when people are often very keen to stand up for their rights. We need to be careful that we do not become infected by what is around us. We must ever remember the character of the calling. It is a high calling but it has been set on by our Lord Jesus as the lowly One.

He "humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). Think of the downward movements of Jesus. Man's thoughts are ever to strive upwards. Think of the meekness of Jesus, He did not stand up for His rights; yet when it came to the rights of God what zeal marked Him. Oh, that we might be more like Him, not standing up for our rights (we have none in any case) but thinking of the rights of God and of Christ in the scene that has rejected Him.

The words "with long-suffering" are added here. Who was more long suffering than our blessed Lord? Then we are exhorted to be, "bearing with one another in love". The secret of this working together in unity is bearing with one another in love. There may be times when we are tested as to that. I think God allows us to be tested because He is working in us in view of conformity to His beloved Son.

Something may arise in the locality or in personal relationships and we are tested as to whether love is able to overcome the problem. There have been so many occasions when love has not been able to overcome. Why? Because we were not on the line of love for one another and bearing with one another in meekness.

Peter asks, 'How often shall I forgive my brother if he sin against me? Until seven times?' (Matthew 18:21). Jesus says to him, 'Until seventy times seven.' I think there is no limit to what the Lord has borne with us. We should be the same with one another. Not that evil is to be allowed in God's house. Let me make that quite clear. It is a sanctuary; it is a place where God dwells. I am not speaking of evil which affects God's dwelling, but of our relations with one another and readiness to be wronged rather than to stand up for our rights. So we are exhorted as to, "using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace". "The unity of the Spirit" is like the oil flowing down from Aaron's head. The whole garment has to be covered in the oil.

Each believer is indwelt by the Spirit of God and all are baptised into one body in the power of one Spirit. That is a fact but sometimes things become disturbed so we have to use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit. Paul adds, "in the uniting bond of peace". I think this involves the practical working out of things. The unity is there. If you meet a believer you find that there is a common link. What a joy it is in a dark world to meet a believer in Jesus and to find that you have an instant link in the Holy Spirit. He is indwelt by the Spirit and so are you.

Yet we must use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. I suppose we all know about the peace negotiations in Northern Ireland. How difficult it is to bring about peace. In the world it is usually done by compromise. That is not the way God works. "Having made peace by the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:20). We should think of what it has cost God that peace might be made. It involved the death of Jesus. It is the allowance of the flesh, the allowance of the first order of man, which disturbs the peace. So we are required to use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. Peace has been made; we need to keep it. Peter in his vision saw a great sheet let down from heaven filled with all the quadrupeds and beasts but they were not fighting with one another! God has made peace through the work of our Lord Jesus.

The intervening portion of Ephesians 4 that we did not read refers to our Lord Jesus, the One who has gone to the very lowest point and who is now at the very highest point. It says "Having ascended up on high, he has led captivity captive, ... But that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same who has also ascended up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things". In the meantime He has made provision for us; He has given gifts in men. Thank God for the apostles and prophets and teachers. We are in a day of small things but we have the word of God; we have the ministry that has proceeded from the apostles and those who have gone before us and we are thankful for it. We are thankful also for any measure in which we prove the service of the Spirit at the present time in view of all arriving at the divine end.

Where do you hope to arrive? The scripture here speaks of arriving "at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God". I do not think it means merely that we all have to arrive at a common understanding or a common belief. I do not think that is quite what is meant by the unity of the faith. It is, I believe, all that God has brought out in this wonderful dispensation made known to us in the Person of His beloved Son, the whole outline and fullness of the truth that is held in faith. We have nothing in actuality yet; all lies in the realm of faith. So, our arrival at the unity of the faith is what God has purposed and had in mind from before time began. We shall arrive at that and at the full knowledge of the Son of God.

Scripture tells us elsewhere that now we only know in part. God has in mind, when His work is complete in each soul, that there will be something arrived at, "until we all arrive". It is not, exactly, the individual arriving, but what God has in mind is in relation to the church. He is working at the present time with the church, until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ. We are not there yet; soon we shall be. We are waiting for that day when the Lord comes. Nevertheless God is working towards that end.

May this occasion contribute something towards that, so that unity may be a reality and God find His full portion in the saints. May the Lord add His blessing to the word.

Don Macphail

An address at Peterhead, March 1998.

REST IN JESUS

Art thou weary, art thou languid,
Art thou sore distressed?
'Come to Me', saith One, 'and, coming,
Be at rest.'

If I find Him, if I follow,
What His guerdon here?
Many a sorrow, many a labour,
Many a tear!

If I still hold closely to Him,
What hath He at last?
Sorrow vanquished, labour ended,
Jordan passed!

Finding, following, keeping, struggling
Is He sure to bless?
Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs,
Answer, 'Yes!'

Stephen the Sabaite (725 - 794)
Translated by John Mason Neale

PRAISE HIM EVERMORE!

Come saints your grateful voices raise,
For grace's boundless store;
Dwell on the Lamb's unchanging love,
And praise Him evermore.

His mercy who our ransom paid,
And all our sorrows bore,
Sing with a note of loftiest joy,
And praise Him evermore.

Soon the redeeming Lord shall come,
For us whose sins He bore,
To see the glories of the Lamb,
And praise Him evermore.

Then endless praise our lips shall move,
And joy our spirits fill;
The objects of His love divine,
Oh who that joy can tell.

Richard Burnham (1749 - 1810)

JESUS, HOW GLORIOUS IS THY GRACE!

Jesus, how glorious is Thy grace!
When in Thy Name we trust,
Our faith receives a righteousness
That makes the sinner just.

Vain are the hopes the sons of men
Upon their works have built;
Their hearts by nature are unclean,
Their actions full of guilt.

Silent let Jew and Gentile stand
Without one vaunting word:
And, humbled low, confess their guilt
Before the righteous Lord.

No hope can on the law be built
Of justifying grace;
The law that shows the sinner's guilt
Condemns him to his face.

With Christ the Lord we died to sin;
With Him to life we rise—
To life which, now begun on earth,
Is perfect in the skies.

Isaac Watts (1674 - 1748)

THE COMING OF THE LORD

Hark, 'tis the watchman's cry;
Wake, brethren, wake!
Jesus our Lord is nigh;
Wake, brethren, wake!
Sleep is for sons of night,
We're children of the light,
Ours is the glory bright—
Wake, brethren, wake!

Philipp Nicolai (1556 - 1608)
Translated by Catherine Winkworth

GOSPEL TRUTH

The two items below are reprinted from Brian Parr's regular column in the Chester local newspaper. The articles have a wide circulation and they are reprinted here, partly so that readers can pray for the Lord to bless this ministry to many who read these testimonies.

I was asked the other day if I thought that the Lord's 'Second Coming' would coincide with the year 2000, as some are predicting. My answer was: 'I don't know, neither do the angels in heaven, neither does the Son; only the Father knows!'

I was on safe ground, because that is exactly what the scripture says (Mark 13:32) and our predictions—even if well-intentioned—mean nothing!

What is absolutely certain is that He will come again with no advance warning. It will be very sudden and quick and the Bible describes it as happening in the "twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52).

The gospel of the grace of God will then be heard no more on this earth. The day of judgment will be at hand, but all who have trusted in the Lord Jesus will be taken to heaven to live with Him there (John 14:3). Little

wonder that the all-important thing is not the date of His coming, but being ready for Him!

A small boy found the family Bible, which was covered in dust, and began turning over its pages. 'Mummy', he asked suddenly, 'Is it true that the Bible is God's book?'

'Yes, indeed it is', she replied.

'Then we had better give it back to Him', the boy said, 'because we never use it'.

It is a splendid thing to have a Bible in the house, but what use is it if we do not read it? Just as food is essential to our bodies and physical well-being, so God's word is essential to our spiritual well-being.

Jesus said: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 5:4).

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16) and is profitable. Yes, even the Old Testament, for of those scriptures Jesus said: "These are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

The words of ordinary men pass away, but "the word of the Lord endureth for ever... and this is the word which by the gospel is preached to you" (1 Peter 1:24-25).

Believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved.

Brian Parr.

1 Lord, Thy word abideth,
And our footsteps guideth;
Who its truth believeth
Light and joy receiveth.

2 O! that we discerning
Its most holy learning,
Lord, may love and fear Thee,
Evermore be near Thee!

H. W. Baker (1821 - 1877)

MARRIAGE IN THE LORD

Ephesians 5:25-32

I want first of all to draw attention to how we each may stand in relation to our own wives, or wives in relation to their own husbands. This is a matter which is most necessary in these days when things at large in the world, and in the christian profession, have fallen away from the divine thought. I have no doubt that God has caused the idea of male and female to permeate the whole of creation and, in lesser degree to what is in the human race, it comes into the lower creation. What happens amongst the lower creatures is a present rebuke to the way that men and women are abandoning the original thought of God.

A believer who earns his living by line fishing in the sea told me that on one occasion when he had his long line out, fishing for big fish, in pulling it in he found great resistance and had to call the help of another in the boat. As they got the line farther in they saw the cause of the trouble; a large female ray had been hooked and a male ray had fastened himself upon the body of his companion and was thrashing the sea with his tail and body to hinder his mate being pulled in. Such was the attachment, even amongst fish, which amazed me. With a struggle they pulled them in and even in pulling over the gunwale the male would not let go; as these two large creatures fell into the boat the believer quoted from the lamentation of David over Saul and Jonathan, " Even in death they were not divided". I say an answer to God's thought like that amongst the lower creation is a rebuke to men and women and amongst christians who give up this sacred matter of men loving their own wives and wives being subject to their own husbands.

I call attention to this, dear young people, you who are in the courting days or nearing them; read this scripture in Ephesians 5, ponder it and get the divine idea into your souls so that your links with the companion you want to make your own may be on the level of the purity, sanctity and faithfulness of that which marks the links of Christ and His church.

Maybe some here may not have heard very much about the assembly, the church, but if you have the Spirit you are a member of Christ's body; believers are said to be members of nothing else, not of a denomination, nor of brethren nor any

other company of persons; we are, as having the Spirit, members of Christ's body. Because of that we are loved personally by Christ; I feel sometimes that the truth of what is collective has been carried beyond its limits and what is personal has been overshadowed. Our personal links with Christ as members of His body are going to abide for ever. He will love perfectly every member of His body and He will love those members as set together, as being His church. Let us therefore be concerned about this, that we are members of His body. We are of His flesh and of His bones. We are so near, we are so like Christ, that we belong to this great mystery which is to be a present and abiding satisfaction of His love.

I call attention just to one other point and that is that His service is in view of presenting it to Himself. That is to say, in that day when all is complete He would admire the church as being that which corresponds to Himself. That is what is said in this scripture. We speak often, and rightly so, of being united to Christ; in the epistle to the Corinthians we read, "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit". That is personal and not collective. We are also said to be of His body and He the Head of the body; that is collective and we are united to Him in that position. In this setting in Ephesians, where it is a question of the satisfaction of His love, it is not a matter of our being united to Him but of Him being united to His church. That is how it is put here; God said this at the beginning, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall be united to his wife".

That is the way it is put and it is for this reason, because the church is of His flesh and of His bones. Because we are members of His body, all that we have we have from Christ. The beauty of the assembly is derived from Him; her substantiality as a creature vessel, and the loveliness and beauty and attractiveness, are all from Christ. Because the church is so suited to Christ He is united to it, He is joined to it.

This word "joined", or "united", in the original means glued to. It is a cabinet maker's term. In these days when 'do-it-yourself' is so popular, many wonder why they cannot make a glued joint. It is because the two pieces do not exactly correspond. To be united, things must be of similar character and exactly correspond. I find in breaking up old furniture that the parent material will give before the joint gives and that is the whole idea of Christ being united to His

assembly. Nothing is ever going to separate it. Think of the wonder of it but what are we doing in the light of this in the present time?

Let me give you a simple illustration. On the past evening when I travelled up from Plymouth in the train, sitting opposite me was a young woman who was quite nicely dressed, yet without trying to be humorous, what one would call a 'plain Jane'. She was travelling to London with the usual accompaniments, something to read and so forth. On the way she did her reading and watched the things that were going around and then she went off to sleep, woken up now and again by the noise of the train. When we got near to Reading she woke up and looked at her watch and the girl was totally transformed. The first thing was to shake herself and sit up and open up her handbag and look at herself in her mirror. She immediately got up and went away and when she came back her disturbed hair had all been rearranged; she had washed herself and made herself look presentable. She sat down and she was concerned about herself, about the crumpling of her dress and was smoothing it out. After we had left Reading she was not interested in the conversation nor her book; that was folded up and put away; she was not interested in the scenery around. She was sitting bolt upright and occasionally her hand would go down to the ring on her left hand and she would look at it and smile. As she looked up her eyes would light up and she would smile, not because I was sitting opposite but because she was going to meet somebody. There was somebody she was expecting to meet when she got to the end of the journey. When we arrived at Paddington station I offered to get her case down from the rack. I lifted it down and it was very light. I said, 'I thought it would have been heavy.' 'Oh no', she said, 'I am travelling light. I do not want to be weighed down. Will you show me the quickest way out?'. I piloted her up into the front coach and said 'You can ease your way out through there'. There she was right up at the front, at the first entrance to get out of the coach, because there was somebody meeting her.

Well, what we are doing at the moment? It is time we looked to see whether we are presentable to Christ; it is time we took up our stand and shook ourselves out of sleep. Our salvation is nearer than when we believed; it is time we thought of what Christ will find in us when He comes. Let us not be besmirched by the journey and that with which we are associated; may we be entirely for Christ and eager to meet Him. May we be travelling light. Perhaps we are weighed

down by unnecessary things when we ought to be eager to meet our coming Saviour. Forgive me for being practical but christianity is not much use if it is not practical. I thought of that young woman again today when some were singing a little chorus in the home:

‘Turn your eyes upon Jesus.
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.’

May that be true of us.

J. O. T. Darton

Word given at a marriage meeting, Yeovil, September, 1970.

DIVINE LOVE REACHING US IN CHRIST

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

“He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God” (John 3:16 & 34)

Sweet was the hour, O Lord, to Thee,
At Sychar’s lonely well,
When a poor outcast heard Thee there
Thy great salvation tell.

Lord, ’twas Thy power unseen that drew
The stray one to that place,
In solitude to learn from Thee
The secrets of Thy grace.

And Lord, to us, as vile as she,
Thy gracious lips have told
That mystery of love revealed
At Jacob's well of old.

In Spirit, Lord, we've sat with Thee
Beside the springing well
Of life and peace, and heard Thee there
Its healing virtues tell.

Edward Denny

Sometimes things seem too high for some of us to reach, but it is not the question whether we can reach up to them, but that our great Priest can reach down to us, and, if He does this, we know that we are thus linked with the place He is in, however feeble we may be.

T. H. Reynolds

The birth of Christ, like the morning, awakened the creation; and the lights of many other days broke forth together to tell that the long dark night had at length given place to a very bright and cheerful morning. Heaven rejoiced, like the sons of God at the creation. Angels, once so well known in Israel, re-appeared. The grace that had acted in the days of the patriarchs again displayed itself. Promises to Abraham and to David, which anticipated the new birth of the people and the kingdom, are cited and rehearsed.

All this is seen on this great occasion, this fresh morning-hour in the progress of the ways of God. And the child born in Bethlehem is welcomed by the seer of God as "the dayspring from on high", the sunrise, or the morning.

J. G. Bellatt

The cross brought to light that there was nothing in man for God. "If one died for all, then were all dead". Man is often large before our eyes; we are easily influenced by what is of man in the way of wisdom or religiousness. But the cross is the power of God to deliver us from all that. Our every blessing is in Christ, and we have also found in Him the perfect revelation of God.

C. A. Coates

HOW SHOULD MAN BE JUST WITH GOD ?

Job 9

In Job we have an example of a strong and upright soul, not understanding grace and with a great deal of self-will. He knew he was upright: God said it of him and Job knew it. But there was a great deal of self-righteousness, self-complacency, and self-will.

His piety made him attribute what came upon him to God and his pride made him rebel against it. It is very interesting to see the exercises of a soul in this state. Job said many right things of God, and he knew God would not treat him as his friends treated him. Job wants to find God. He knows God would do him justice if he found Him but he could not find God. Job had not the secret opened as we have it. He was calling himself righteous. The question raised was how righteousness was to be found. Here is a soul in conflict with Satan.

There was life in Job, graciousness in his walk in life, and upright dealing. God said to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?". It was not Satan who spoke first to God, but God to Satan. God knew what He was going to do; Satan did not.

This took place before the law was given, before the gospel came. How is a man to be just with God? was Job's concern. His friends had no thought about that. They were going on the ground of this world being the sphere in which God's righteousness in government is manifested but Job saw the wicked prospering, the righteous sad. Some will reason, soundly enough too, and tell us the other world will be the sphere where righteous acts will be rewarded and the wicked punished. But why, if worthy of a good place in the next world, are they tormented here? But we cannot judge the state of a man's soul by his outward circumstances. There is another thing besides righteousness, and that is grace. Grace meets with sin, and yet it does not contradict righteousness.

Job had not really learnt what his own righteousness was worth, and he had not learnt how God brings a soul to the consciousness of its state. Neither Job nor his friends understood God's way of grace, how God could ride over the sin by

meeting it in grace. Job's friends could philosophise and could tell a quantity of truths but what comfort was there in that to a broken heart?

Now, God in Christ is dealing with sinners. It is not men acting for God, but God acting in grace, because of man's state. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). God was working because man was in sin and in misery.

The book of Job does not show God dealing in law, nor promise, nor in full grace, as shown out in Christ; but here is a man taken up, Satan accusing him, and God dealing with him. A master hand was guiding all in Job's case, though Satan was permitted to sift him. The accuser goes up, and God says, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Now Job must go through another process to learn how a man, a sinner, could be blessed with God Himself, could know Him, could understand His thoughts and feelings. Satan might touch his goods, but not himself. This seems but an everyday occurrence: loss of property etc. God carries it on, showing how He orders everything. Job stands these losses; he blesses the name of the Lord but his heart was not reached. His wife comes and says, "Curse God and die". His piety is proof against this also but his heart was not reached but God has to do His work thoroughly. Job sits in the gate, his friends around him; he was a spectacle for every one; it is too much for him. He curses the day he was born. Many can say good things of God who have never tasted what they are themselves in the presence of God. What we want is a righteousness that cannot be shaken in the presence of God. We must be brought to this, not only be conscious of grace, but have truth in the conscience.

Peter needed to learn what he was. There is a practical discovery in the presence of God of all the mischief that is in the springs of the heart; we want the springs of the heart broken up. How many are discontented with God, not looking after holiness, but seeking to make themselves comfortable! Until the will has been crushed in the presence of the majesty of God, there cannot be a right state before God. God does hate iniquity and love righteousness but what good is that for a ruined man?

Those who received Christ justified God. The Pharisees complained because He ate with publicans and sinners but the publican can say, 'That is just what I want'. The sinner justifies God in owning the sin and receiving the grace. A man never knows God until he gets to that point. "How should man be just with

God?" Men are willing to contend with Him but what good is that? says God. God does love righteousness but what avails that to me? How many sins today or yesterday have I committed? It is no good pleading with God on that ground.

Then Job takes up another case. He cannot answer God in His majesty and he does not see His love. "If I justify myself, my own mouth will condemn me." How can I justify myself? How many foolish words this week? If I am unrighteous what can I do? He is vexed in his soul about it. "He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent." A scourge comes, and perhaps the best family falls a prey to it. Shall I give up God then, and not trouble myself about it? But Job has to do with God, and he cannot help it. He cannot escape His hand. God is not a man, as we are. Job would have got away from God's presence if he could, but he could not; he was all wrong as to this, but he could not get away from God. "Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch." I cannot make myself clean before God.

Men pass through the world in an astonishing way, thinking about their character, conduct, and of getting honour from one another; but what are they in God's sight? Whited sepulchres! Fair without, but full of dead men's bones within. The more a man labours to be good, the more he finds he is like the Ethiopian who cannot change his skin: the evil is in his nature, and he cannot get rid of it. When there is real integrity of heart, there is struggle. The sense of integrity, without the knowledge of righteousness, is the occasion of much misery in the heart. Job says, "Let not his fear terrify me." He had this fear. God has taken away the fear in Christ, and there is a "daysman" (or mediator) betwixt us, such as Job felt the need of (see Job 9:33).

The consequences of sin are not seen yet. God is saving now, not judging in righteousness. There is the time coming when He will rule in righteousness. He is saving souls now for a better state hereafter but when He rules, the sinner, dying a hundred years old, will be accursed. (See Isaiah 65:20). We cannot judge of people's state of soul by their circumstances; we cannot say those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were worse than all that dwelt at Jerusalem.

When I come to that point, to say (not the world is wicked, but) I am wicked, I have the "daysman" (Christ) between me and God. He is the One who has come to me in all the wickedness of my heart, and has come to me because I am so.

Now I have, not only God working in me, sending Satan to plough up the fallow ground, and to show to my conscience what was there long before, but God doing a work for me. He brings in a righteousness (His own) for the sinner. He works a work for us.

The first thing I find then, is that this my state has not kept Him away from me, but it has brought Him to me. That is grace, not righteousness. Hiding my sin from me would not be mercy. Not letting me see things as God sees them is not mercy. It is in meeting me just as I am, and acting above the sin, that He has shown mercy. Christ never alarms people who come to Him in their need. To the hypocrite He speaks terror, but to the poor in spirit it is, 'Fear not: I am all that you need.' You say, 'I am such a sinner.' Christ says 'That is just the reason I am come.' You reply, 'I have an awful will.' 'That is the reason I am come' says Christ: 'I will break your will.'

"Neither do I condemn you," said He to the woman accused by the Pharisees. I defy you to find a case where Christ brought fear upon a convicted conscience. He takes the fear away instead of causing it. He comes in the poorest and the lowest way to meet with those in need, and that they might not be afraid of Him. Grace reigns; it has come in God's own blessed sovereignty.

How different are men's thoughts of righteousness now from God's! We can let all go on in this world without trying to set things right, knowing we have something better. We are made the righteousness of God in Christ.

We have a daysman not only laying His hand on man but on God. He is the Mediator to reconcile. Not only has Christ come to me in my sins, but He has come to answer for me, taking up the whole cause. He has done it, settled the whole thing as to my sins, and is gone back to appear in the presence of God for me. He has appeared for God amongst us, but now He is gone to appear for us in the presence of God. I have given up all attempt to answer for myself: He has taken it up. Has God accepted His answer for me? Here faith comes in to accredit God when He says He has accepted Him. The work that the daysman has done is accepted. We know not only that there is a daysman, but that the daysman has sat down, the work being finished, no more remaining to be done (as to the sacrifice). The Holy Ghost is the witness of that: "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

Righteousness is there before God. I am not talking of the fruits of righteousness, but of righteousness itself. God's mind is that He has accepted Christ. God has given Him—that is love. He has accepted His work—that is righteousness. Now there is no fear. Grace reigns through righteousness. I stand in the presence of God by virtue of the perfect righteousness that has been presented to God.

Where is love to be seen? Very feebly indeed amongst christians, but love is not feeble in God. I find in Him perfect love. He has broken my heart because it was a hard heart. I have the key to it all now through the gospel. Self-will, pride, all must be broken; but God is perfect love. He has taken away the sin by the cross, and He has provided righteousness. Then what have I to fear? Though He will exercise our souls that we may know good and evil, it is all love. I can glory in tribulation, knowing that it worketh patience, experience, hope.

Now, beloved friends, are you resting on Christ, the Mediator, or are you saying, 'If I can make my hands a little cleaner, my conscience a little quieter, I shall be all right?' If you were to stand in the presence of God, that would be all spoiled (Job 9:31). What sort of righteousness is that which is spoiled in the presence of God?

It is the blood which has made atonement, and Christ at the right hand of God is our righteousness.

J N Darby

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation
hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11)