

No. 34

***Living Water* — Issue No 34**

The two short articles by J. N. Darby included in this issue are reproduced from “Basketfuls of Fragments” No.1 (April 1998). They are translated from the French and have not been available in English before.

The article on “The Lord’s Supper” on page 19 is extracted from “Handing on the Torch”. This book is now available in Spanish as well as English; the Spanish translation was carried out by Robin Garvie of Buenos Aires. “Handing on the Torch” is available from the Stone Publishing Trust in either Spanish or English price £4.00.

The note on the work of the Lord in Albania in the “Testimony” section is extracted from letters from Christians working in Albania. It is of particular interest due to current events in the Balkans.

Finally readers may be interested to know that the poem “A vessel of Mercy” was written by Mr Griffin Stone. Mr Stone was taken to be with the Lord many years ago but the Stone Publishing Trust was formed as a result of a bequest in the will of his widow, Mrs Dorothy Stone, late of Bromley, Kent.

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“Living Water” is available on tape. If you would like to receive the tape edition please contact the Trust at the address given on the back page.

Ed.

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THE LORD AS MODEL

“... giving thanks at all times for all things to him who is God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord, for a husband is head of the wife, as also the Christ is head of the assembly. He is Saviour of the body. But even as the assembly is subjected to the Christ, so also wives to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your own wives, even as the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it, in order that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present the assembly to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless. So ought men also to love their own wives as their own bodies: he that loves his own wife loves himself. For no one has ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as also the Christ the assembly: for we are members of his body; we are of his flesh, and of his bones. Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly. But ye also, every one of you, let each so love his own wife as himself; but as to the wife I speak that she may fear the husband.

(Ephesians

5:20-33)

I began where I did because the verses read have a context. Paul had been speaking to the Ephesians about the high calling that the saints of God have and from chapter four onwards he begins to bring home how that is worked out in Christians here. It makes a difference in the way they gather together, the way they live and do their business and the way they relate to the things of this world. He says we are always to be thankful, but I had more in mind verse 21: “submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ”. It is a call for a subject spirit. Then, immediately, he turns to one particular relationship where this needs to be worked out; the apostle has something to say about husbands and wives. But as he begins to speak of it he becomes occupied with the glory of the Lord and His service to the church, and that is what dominates the latter part of the chapter.

I think, though, we should note the way that the passage speaks of husbands and wives. I am going to say something obvious, but which needs putting bluntly,

which is that marriage, christian marriage, is under very serious attack. I need not trouble you with the statistics of marriage in the world, but marriage as we know it is under great attack. I am not speaking of it being attacked through individuals; I am speaking of the kind of attack that Satan is busy with in these days. So I should like to call attention to the model of the Lord Jesus. There is also another model, and that is the model of the church. So the two go side by side. Paul says, “I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly”.

Now because the apostle has been speaking of the need of subjection, he puts wives first here and calls upon them to be subject, because their husband is their head, “as also the Christ is head of the assembly”. This is not trying to keep alive some heathen patriarchal system or anything of that kind. This draws its inspiration from the model of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to be found, of course, very very early in scripture. The divine concept of marriage is to be found there but, the apostle says, “even as the assembly is subjected to the Christ, so also wives to their own husbands in everything”. Those are very exhaustive statements. Then he speaks to husbands, “love your own wives”. So there are two sides to this matter: there is the responsibility of the wife and the responsibility of the husband and the standard is given, which may give us all to pause, “even as the Christ also loved the assembly”. Then comes something which we could not apply to ourselves, “and has delivered himself up for it, in order that he might sanctify it”. That is distinctive to the Lord. It is only He who could deliver Himself up so as to redeem a company to Himself. It is only He who is able to sanctify. He does so “by the washing of water by the word”. That is, the word of God is brought to bear upon His relations with His assembly, the church.

At that point we may begin to feel that there is something we can make our own, that the bringing of the word of God to bear upon married life is a great help. It has this sanctifying effect; “the washing of water by the word” will tend to cleanse us from the defilements that come in along the way. Then the Lord has a goal in mind, “that he might present the assembly to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless”.

We know that there is much fault that could be found with the assembly, or church, of God at the present time but this is the goal that the Lord has in mind. When the time for presentation comes this is how it will be, when everything of corruption is left behind. That does have a bearing—I do not want to divert

more than a moment - but it does have a bearing on how we regard the assembly of God now. If we are in the assembly of God with real exercise of heart it seems to me that you and I will be looking into the scriptures to see how the Lord intends that assembly life should be conducted and seeking to follow that out. That will have the same kind of effect on our spirits as it has had with believers down the ages. They become concerned as to what suits the presence of the Lord and they find that things are not as they should be, so they become concerned as to what they can do that will be more consistent with the godly order that scripture presents.

This is quite a different matter from simply assenting to doctrinal ideas of what is right by way of godly order; I am not, of course, detracting from that. But if we look back over a little history I think we would have to say that doctrinal ideas of what is right or wrong have not actually proved much of a preservative but real affection for the Lord and concern for what is due to Him can be a very great preservative despite many difficulties.

The apostle then comes back to love, love in the marriage relationship. “So ought men also to love their own wives as their own bodies: he that loves his own wife loves himself”. In a way he is saying, ‘It is not a very demanding thing because, if your wife is as close to you as that, it is really no more than loving yourself’. We may well say, how simple it is! Well, these things have to be worked out day by day. But he says it is “even as also the Christ the assembly”. So we have that model and example for us. I know of no example that will help us as much as that.

I commend to us all that our view of marriage should be fully formed by what the scripture has to say about it, by the model set before us in the Lord, and where He shows where the grace is to be found that is needed to work it out. I do not think that anyone who has been in the marriage relationship for a few years would deny that problems and burdens come along and it would be foolish to pretend otherwise. These are the simple realities of life. But they are to be worked out in the assurance that the bond cannot be broken and that grace will have to be found in the only place where it is to be found, that is in the presence of the Lord.

I have really come to an end, except to note verse 32, where the apostle says that he has been speaking about husbands and wives but what he was really concerned for was Christ and the church. Even the relationship of man and wife

is a great mystery but he shows us what he really has in mind when he says: “But I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly”. Christ on the one hand and the assembly on the other are brought together and he has something distinctive to say about each. I think that is why he does not quite say ‘I speak as to Christ and the assembly’; he has got something separate to say about each, the distinctive feature regarding each of them: one the Head and the other the subject body.

I would like to understand better why that verse comes in, “He is Saviour of the body”. I do not feel I have anything much to say about it but leave it with you to reflect on. I think I can see how even as to His body He is its Saviour. Whether it goes further into our own relationships I seek more help of the Spirit to understand but it is remarkable that the word comes in where it does. “He is Saviour of the body”.

That is all I had for this time, may the Lord help us, for His name’s sake. Amen.

David Burr

Extract from an address at Sevenoaks, February 1999.

DEVELOPMENT IN LOVE FOR CHRIST

I want to speak about people who are lovable. Love is of God and as begotten of God love should operate in us. That is not always the case, as we know, but divine love brings out something in us that is real.

The Woman that was a Sinner (Luke 7:36-38 & 47)

I start with Luke 7, with a woman who knew she was a sinner. Once you realise that you are a sinner you are on the way to blessing. Nothing stopped her from entering the house of Simon the Pharisee. Simon had begged the Lord to come and eat with him and the Lord went, though He knew beforehand that Simon would not even pay Him the customary courtesies of the day, Why did He go? He went because of divine goodness and because He knew there was a woman who had need of Him and that she was going to come into that house that day.

All of us should remember that the Lord knows everything about us. One says: “Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising” (Psalm 139:2). We are not together at meetings all the time but we are under the eye of Christ all the time. That is a good thing to realise, because to be under the eye of Christ and to want

Him is to have the knowledge of His saving grace that we need all the way through.

So this woman comes in to Simon's house. She knew she was a sinner; she stands behind the Lord weeping. She had her box of myrrh; she knew something, I believe, of the suffering love of Christ. We should all know about the suffering love of Jesus that took Him to Calvary, that caused Him to shed His precious blood in order that sinners and rebels like us might be brought into the greatest blessing that only God Himself could devise.

This woman was taken account of by the Lord Himself and heaven was interested in her coming into Simon's house. The Lord Jesus told Simon of two debtors; one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. Simon thought of the woman as the five hundred pence debtor but he did not think of himself as even a fifty pence debtor. Yet the word was that when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both.

Mercy comes when it is not deserved; none of us deserves anything but judgment. Thanks be to God who has come in by Christ and brought the greatest blessing into the universe. It is still available. This woman found mercy and I tell you tonight the gospel is going out and heaven will be rejoicing because of repenting sinners. This woman loved much. Let that be true of every one of us. I believe that if we deepen in the sense of mercy we shall love the Lord Jesus more. He came to show mercy. He is set forth a mercy seat through faith in His blood. Christ is set forth that way so that, even as believers, we might deepen in the sense of the mercy of God that has reached us.

Simon had a judgment of the woman. He says: "if he were a prophet he would have known who and what the woman is". The Lord says to him: "I entered into thy house". What happened? Simon did not offer the Lord even the courtesy of the day. The Lord tells Simon that the woman had given it all and she "loved much". "Her many sins are forgiven; for she loved much". Let us deepen in our affection for the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who has washed us from our sins in His blood at Calvary.

Peter who denied the Lord (John 21:15-17)

I turn to the last chapter of John. It is often described as an appendix, since the gospel account really finishes at chapter 20. Chapter 21, though, tells us about Peter and six others of the apostles who had gone on a fishing trip. They laboured

all night and caught nothing! What a fruitless expedition it was and how often we have launched out in our own way and found it to be just as fruitless. But Jesus stood on the shore. I love that; Jesus is standing in a position of absolute stability. These wayward disciples went fishing yet the Lord is ready to meet them. He says: “Children, have ye anything to eat?” and they have to say, ‘No’. It was a fruitless trip! And we have made many a fruitless trip and it is just as well to be honest about it.

Yet, what we find here is that the Lord has everything and He brings everything. He says: “Cast the net at the right side of the ship and ye will find”. What a catch they get, a hundred and fifty-three great fishes. Then when they get to the shore they find that He has a fire and fish on it and bread. He says to them: “Bring of the fishes which ye have now taken”. That was divine grace extended to these wayward disciples. In saying that I am not being hard on them because we are all wayward. The only one who never deviated was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The difference between the gospels and the epistles, it has been said, is that in the gospels you have one Man moving in perfection and in the epistles you have men moving, and getting things from the Spirit of God and the Lord Himself, but subject to failure. Let us remember that. In the gospels we have one Man moving in absolute perfection. What a Saviour!

After they had dined, the Lord says to Peter, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” Apart from John telling us this we would not know what caused Peter’s failure when he denied the Lord. Peter had once said, ‘If all deny thee, yet not I’. He thought he loved the Lord Jesus more than the rest of them! Oh, let us increase in our love for the Lord Jesus but let us not speak too much about our love for Him and let us speak all the time about His love for us.

When Peter failed and denied the Lord, as recorded in Luke’s gospel, it needed only one look from the Lord and Peter was a broken man; “The Lord, turning round, looked at Peter” (Luke 22:61). But the Lord had other things to do with Peter and here He is proving him in regard to his love and the service Peter was to render.

Peter is probed and finally he says, “Lord, thou knowest all things”. Peter loved the Lord but he just had an impression that he loved Him more than the others did. Let us not compare ourselves with ourselves. Neither can we compare ourselves with the Lord, for there is none to be compared with Him. Let us see

to it that our love for the Lord Jesus is deepening. I feel that for myself. The time for showing it in this scene will soon be over; the Lord is about to come. May we be deepened in our affections for Him!

Peter is probed three times and then the Lord leaves the matter, for He has accomplished what He wanted in that great servant. In his falling away and denying the Lord Peter is not set aside in any way. The message from the angel was, “go, tell his disciples and Peter” (Mark 16:7). But here in the company of the others He is showing Peter that the very thing which he thought about himself was not right, and he had to learn that the questions of the Lord were to deepen him in love towards Himself. So when the Lord may probe us it is for the same reason.

John and the Women by the Cross (John 19:25-27)

In John 19 we are told: “By the cross of Jesus stood his mother, and the sister of his mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Jesus therefore, seeing his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, says to his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then he says unto the disciple, Behold thy mother”.

“The disciple whom Jesus loved”, that was John. John took that position early in the pathway of Jesus, and later he laid on His bosom. That position was available to all of them, and John took it and the Lord appreciated that. When you come to the incident in John 21, when they went on that fruitless fishing trip, John is the first to recognise the Lord. Can I recognise the Lord? He is speaking to us but do we recognise Him? These are challenging things.

At the cross there were three women, real lovers of Jesus standing by the cross. Would you have stood by the cross if you had been there? Would I have stood by the cross? I doubt it. What would ‘standing by the cross’ mean? It was a real place of reproach. The hymn says:

‘Twas there my Saviour suffered,
And tasted death for me.’

He tasted death for every thing (Hebrews 2:9). I do not understand the fullness of that, that the One upon whom death had no claim tasted death at Calvary. These women stood by the cross and it says that the Lord saw them. In His physical suffering He took account of who was there. There is no mention here of either of the thieves; that is not the point; the focus is the glory of the Son of

God. Seeing the disciple whom He loved He says to His mother, “Woman, behold thy son”. He does not say ‘mother’. That order of things was finished as Christ was going into death—“Woman, behold thy son”. Then He says to John, “ Behold thy mother”.

I have pondered this fact; why did the Lord commit His mother to John? There was other family but this was the disciple whom He loved. Let us think of the communication that John would have with the Lord’s mother. She must have wondered at His perfection. It says, when the shepherds came, that Mary “kept all these things in her mind, pondering them in her heart”. (Luke 2:19) Have I pondered the glory of Christ? Have I kept things in my mind and pondered them in my heart? That is what Mary did and I have no doubt John would speak often with Mary about Jesus.

What a challenge this is. Do I speak about Jesus much? I can stand here and speak about Him but what do I know of Him and the things that are His? Let us know more about speaking with the Lord Jesus. He is speaking to us and He would have us speak to Him. Even in the old economy, God spoke to Moses and it says that he spoke to the Lord. Oh, let us remember the glory of divine things and the glory and the greatness of the Person who is the head of them.

Well, I ask every one of us to ponder these things, to see what has come out in John’s gospel and in John’s epistle, “That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled” (1 John 1:1). The twelve, the eleven we should say, had a fellowship with the Lord Himself in manhood that even Paul never had. John reminds us that we have fellowship with them. So there is no drawback in the fellowship with them. But they had a particular fellowship as being with the Lord in manhood and Paul speaks about them in that way. Paul says of some that they were “in Christ before me”. John says, “our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”. John also says, “that ye also may have fellowship with us”. Let us enjoy that fellowship. Let us enjoy these things that John presents so beautifully to us. How important they are for us to take on, not only in our head, but to ponder them, to take them into our heart. Let the things grow with us to the glory of Christ as the Son of God.

Jim McIntyre

Extract from an address at Wolverhampton 1998.

A VESSEL FOR CHRIST

Note. Parts of this poem will be familiar to some readers of this magazine as providing the basis of the hymn beginning: 'Thy grace, O Lord, that measured once the deep'.

A tiny vessel, Lord, to Thee I bring,
A heart that sought from every earthly spring
To gain its longing, but was empty still;
I bring it now to Thee, to take and fill.

Thy grace, that measured once the distance deep
Of Calvary's woe, to seek and save Thy sheep,
Has touched this heart, and made it long for Thee,
Thyself its treasure and its all to be.

Thy glory now at God's right hand above,
Supreme of all in that blest scene of love,
In sonship tells this heart its wondrous place
In Thee accepted by the Father's grace.

Thy fulness, Lord, of light and love divine,
No thought can grasp, nor human mind define;
The whole vast scene of glory will display
That fulness in a quickly coming day.

When all things filled by Thee are wholly blest,
And God's deep love eternally shall rest
In that which ever speaks to Him of Thee,
Thy greatness, Lord, the universe shall see.

But ere that day of bliss and joy supreme,
When Thou shalt be of every tongue the theme,
Let this small vessel prove Thy gracious power
To fill and satisfy it every hour.

Thy beauties, Lord, Thy holy, precious worth,
Surpassing far the fairest joys of earth,
Shall then absorb its true and constant love,
Thyself its object in those scenes above;

And filled with Thee, and formed through grace divine,
By all that fills it, hold it, Lord, as Thine;
To be, in joy and peace that know no fear,
The happy vessel of Thy pleasure here!

C A Coates (1862-1945)

A VESSEL OF MERCY

Would you refuse,
If through death's closing door to-night your soul
Must pass, the offer of forgiveness made to thee?
Ignore the dying agony of God's own Son
Alone upon the cross for you at Calvary.
Would you refuse?

Will you regret,
When at the great white throne the book
Of life is opened and your name's not shown?
When you hear the final judgment: 'Depart for
Ever', for the sins you can't atone.
Will you regret?

Oh, Jesus, Saviour,
Grant but one request, that in the
Book of Life my name may be enroled.
My sins, my guilt, the wrath of God,
Were borne for me at Calvary. Oh love untold
I now accept.

F Griffin Stone

A NOTE ON THE WORK OF THE LORD IN ALBANIA

(Extracts from letters from christian workers)

“We write this as NATO warplanes roar above us in the darkness heading for Kosovo. The people are anxious about what will happen. How long will the war last? How many will be killed? Will the war spread into Albania and the other Balkan States? Only God knows the answer to these questions. We simply put our trust in Him during this time and go about our business of spreading the gospel. The Lord continues to bless in Pogradec and 32 have come to the Lord in two months.”

“I thought that you would be interested in hearing how we are using some of the supplies we have received... George is going every day to two refugee camps and is the resident “doctor”. He has aspirin, antibiotic creams etc., they are in great demand. This is the only medical treatment they are receiving as far as we know. The Kosovars have never heard the gospel and have no knowledge whatever of God. It is much like Albania 10 years ago. We have many coming to the meetings. On Sunday we had over 100 people at our house for dinner. It was a lot of work but a joy to see the Kosovars enjoy themselves. Nearly every day we have a family for lunch, or to wash clothes or to have a wash themselves. Each day I make a large container of tea and George takes it over to one of the camps. As they drink their tea he speaks to them from the Bible....

“Our hall is packed with many Kosovars at every meeting. Pray for their salvation.”

These details are given so that readers of this magazine can remember this work in prayer. How gladly we can give thanks to God when we see His work going on in even in such difficult circumstances.

Ed.

STREAMS OF LIVING WATER

The Secret of Joy

“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.”

“I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be content in myself.”

Philippians 4:4, 11.

My Desire for you

That ever, midst the worry
Of busy outward life,
The inner life may flourish,
Unhindered by the strife.

That thou mayest know His presence
To brighten all the way,
And prove His grace sufficient
For each succeeding day.

That more increased attractions
In Jesus thou may'st see:
And mine is but an echo
Of His desire for thee!

Adalbert

Cecil.

A sick person once said to me, ‘I am too weak to think of the Lord as I would like’. I replied: ‘The Lord thinks of you.’

If an Israelite visited the tabernacle in the morning, he would know that during the night the smoke of the evening lamb had been ascending to God during the time that he had been in the helplessness of sleep. It would have taught him the favour that he was in. “The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him.”

In moments of weakness Satan may try to cast down the saint but it is here that the grace of the great High Priest is known, and we find that we are sustained by the hand of the same blessed Person, whose heart bears our names before God.

T H Reynolds

The grand secret of spiritual freshness and soul prosperity is to have the Person of Christ so before the heart that we are attracted to Himself with intense longing of heart to know Him better.

C A Coates

THE BELIEVER'S SPIRIT

Part 2—The Spirit of a Servant

Luke 22:24-27

“...But I am in the midst of you as the one that serves”

In considering the servant spirit we can delight in the incident recorded in Luke 22, for there is something exceedingly touching about it. They had just broken bread together on the occasion of the institution of the Lord's supper. We should have thought that the effect of being present on that memorable occasion would have subdued the spirits of the disciples in the presence of His wonderful love. Instead of that we find immediately afterwards that a dispute arises amongst them. When He was just about to go to the cross to die for them, when His own spirit was moved to the utmost depths in His tender love to lay down His life for them, at that moment they were engaged in a dispute as to which of them should be the greatest.

Are we marvelling at it, or do we know our own hearts well enough to say, 'That is exactly what I have found in my own heart?' After the most touching expression

of the Lord's love to us, we have found that some snare has caught us, showing us that the most remarkable occasion of spiritual joy has not safeguarded us against the spirit of the flesh. What does the Lord do? Very tenderly He rebukes them.

It would be an interesting study to go over the rebukes that the Lord in His love administered to His disciples. It would give us an insight into the tender grace of Christ, for though He rebukes them, we can say in the words of the Proverbs: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend". He never discouraged them; they clung to Him the more after a rebuke than they had ever done before.

Thus, on this occasion, while they were disputing which of them should be the greatest, He presents Himself to them in all the wonder of His servant character in order to rebuke the spirit of pride, jealousy, envy, and self seeking. He presents Himself in all the beauty of His own servant spirit to them, and says to them: "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves".

These words are worth pondering; they are worthy of meditation and prayerful consideration. Are we among our brethren in that spirit? Are we ever ready to render service to one another in the spirit of that perfect Servant whom we follow? Do we know what it is to recognise that it is greater to sit at table and be served, and are we therefore prepared to take the place of the servant?

The true spirit of the servant would be one of going down. So we would ponder the Lord Jesus, the greatest One in the universe, the Son of God, yet here He is in lowly grace among His disciples, who were quarrelling amongst themselves who should be the greatest. He was among them as the One that served. What a lesson for us!

We each have before us a path of service, but before we can be effective in that path we need to have the 'servant' spirit. Are you waiting for the day when you can do something great and be honoured among those that believe? Are you waiting until you can do something so well that everyone will say how well you did it? You will never serve the Lord Jesus like that! Will you not wait on Him to receive the 'servant' spirit? Then you will be prepared to serve though it were only five words with the understanding, to serve though it may create no impression other than: 'Well however feebly he did it he was marked by the lowly spirit of Christ in doing it'. This will be effectual service for Christ. There would be no desire with us to be the greatest; each would be seeking to take the lowest place in order that by doing so we might get a little nearer the

Master whom we serve. He who would be greatest is seeking a place the furthest from the Master, for the Master went to the very lowest place to serve us.

F. S. Marsh

In the next issue D.V. 'The Spirit of a Son'

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Christ refreshes us at the Supper by bringing again before us the expression of divine love.

At the Supper it is a great thing to be simple, and partake of what Christ sets before us. In His body given He presents to us our removal, and in the cup the love of God...

If you have every endowment and have not love, you are nothing! I might be endowed with the gift of tongues, or of healing, or what not, but if I have not love I am nothing. It is everything to see what the size of the vessel is. Your size is measured by your love. How much do you love? Exactly as much as you are conscious of being loved. That is why the truth of the Lord's supper is brought into the subject in chapter 11 (of 1 Corinthians) showing how "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it", and exactly in the measure that we apprehend His love, we ourselves love, and that is the measure of our spiritual stature.

...the moment you recall His death, as the expression of His love, He is realised as living, for the love is still there.

The present covenant is set forth in the death of Christ; and therefore you get “the new covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20)... The Lord in the Supper brought before the disciples what was God’s disposition towards them; and the effect of it is to bring us into the place of worshippers.

I have thought that one never really understands the import of anything the Lord Jesus did in His ministry on earth except in the light of His death. That is what I understand the Lord Jesus to have meant in saying to the disciples, do this, that is referring to the Supper, in remembrance of Me. By His death they were to call Him to mind in His life.

Until a person is affected by the love of Christ, I do not think he will accept His will. His love becomes the motive power. In the Lord’s supper, it is the supper that gives impulse to the affections of the saints; it is the death of Christ that gives a fresh impulse.

You will find that the Lord’s supper, properly apprehended and carried out, has the effect of putting saints in touch with Christ and with one another. In assembling together, each coming from his engagement and home, saints are not for the moment free in spirit to enter into what is proper to the assembly, but they sit down for a while and partake of the Lord’s supper, and so get in touch with Christ and with one another; they are thus brought into the spirit and tone of the assembly, and are as different as possible in mind and spirit from what they were at first.

The rallying point of the assembly is the Lord’s supper.

You must be in accord with Him. If He is rejected, I am rejected. If He has died, I have died; I am in accord with Him. We witness this every Lord’s day morning.

There are two christian...ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s supper...Baptism speaks of dissociation from the world, and the Lord’s supper of the fellowship of Christ’s death...Baptism is the act of another—no one baptises himself: on

the other hand, the Lord's supper is your own act, and in it you endorse what was set forth in your baptism...It is most important to see the true character of the christian ordinances and what they convey. They signify the moral dissociation of christians from the present evil world.

F E Raven

The above is taken from 'Handing on the Torch'; a series of extracts from the ministry of F. E. Raven arranged according to subject. The book is available from the Stone Publishing Trust, price £4.

A Spanish edition translated by Robin Garvie in the Argentine is now available. Enquiries should be made in the first place to the Stone Publishing Trust.

LIVING EPISTLES OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians 3

The Christian is Christ's letter addressed to men. By his conduct he ought to speak to men of the goodness and holiness of God; and the power of the Holy Spirit. This letter is often, it is true, spoilt and blotted, but it ought to be seen and read by the world. If the world sees the blots, it blames them severely but justly.

God has put man's heart to the test in many ways.

- 1) By the prohibition given to Adam innocent. Adam disobeyed, and sin came into the world.
- 2) By the law of Moses. The law gave a new character to sin. Sin was an evil independently of the law, before the law was introduced; but the law stamped the particular character of disobedience and transgression upon it.
- 3) By the prophets. In rejecting them, men showed their hatred of God's actions in goodness.
- 4) Above all, by the gift of His Son; "Perhaps when they see him they will respect him", says God; but men said, "This is the heir; [come], let us kill him".

God saw that the thoughts of man were only evil continually, and it was His will to make man experience this, and thus reveal to him the wickedness of his heart. Israel had been taken out of Egypt by grace, preserved from the ten plagues by grace, delivered from the sea, led through the desert by grace, fed with the manna, made to drink water from the rock by grace; but instead of holding to grace, they wanted to earn God's favour in committing themselves to do all the things imposed by the law, and they experienced their powerlessness. The people of Israel were in the midst of other peoples like a plot of ground set apart on the face of the desert. All God's cultivation only served to show the intractability of the soil. As for us, we have not crucified Christ, it is true, but we are the same kind of ground as Israel, and would not yield any other fruit. Israel was in the most favourable conditions of spiritual cultivation. They produced only thorns and briars, and by nature we cannot produce anything else.

Therefore we are in no state to come to God as if we could present to Him anything more than Israel could, and God must reject us also. Is He to be the only one obliged to receive unworthy people into His house? Is heaven to be the only place where sin and defilement should have free entry?

All that we are, we are in Jesus; by Him alone we have access to the Father. He has borne our sin and our condemnation... The very fact that God has received Him is a pledge to us that we are received by Him. The death of Christ speaks of the righteousness of God and the condemnation of sin. His reception in glory speaks of the reception in grace and glory of the Father's children, and Christ's co-heirs.

The duty of behaving like children flows from the privilege of being children: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Every privilege is the source of a duty: that is why the Christian ought to be a living letter, speaking to all, even to the wicked, of what is in the Father and with the Father. Christ is our letter and our commendation before God; we are Christ's letter to plead in His favour before the world.

Christ has left us a model to follow. In following it we shall soon be convinced how far below Him we are, and this experience will keep us in humility.

J N Darby

Translated from "Le Messager Evangelique" 1886 Vol. 27 Page 13.

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THE LORD KNOWN IN THE MIDST

John 20

Mary of Magdala loved Jesus, but she was seeking Him among the dead instead of seeking Him among the living. She comes to the sepulchre, like many souls who are attached to the Saviour, and weeps there. She had not understood the Lord's power: she seeks Him where He no longer is, and grieves. Jesus meets her and speaks to her heart. Instead of finding Him in death, she finds Him again in life. But He must ascend to the Father in order to wait for His own there.

It is first of all to Mary of Magdala, this poor woman who had had seven demons, that Jesus reveals Himself after the resurrection. He makes her His messenger to announce the fulness of His resurrection. He sends her to His brethren: "Go to my brethren". Now that Jesus is in heaven, and has made us children of God, He calls us His brethren. Risen and glorified, He is nearer to us and we are nearer to Him than before His resurrection.

Jesus goes to His Father and our Father, His God and our God. He puts us on the same line as Himself. Together with Jesus, we are placed in the same relationship before God. If I believe in the words of Jesus, and trust in what He has said to me, I accept and understand this place which He gives us, and in which God brings satisfaction not only to our love but to His own love towards us.

This hope, the effect of the message which puts them as children before God, gathers the disciples together. When Jesus was down here He kept His own; He did not say "Peace be to you", but "Fear not", "Be not afraid". Now He says, "Peace be to you". The disciples closed the door to the Jews; they were full of fear before man. Now they are full of hope as regards heaven, having Jesus in their midst. Jesus communicates to them the joy and peace of His presence, and at the same time He sends them forth into the world. There is no peace in the world, but the Saviour sends a message of peace there. All the strength of their work was to be fulfilled by the Holy Spirit.

When the disciples gather together, what they have to desire above all is not to receive blessing but to have the presence of Jesus and to enjoy this presence. They gather together in communion, to taste the personal presence of the Lord in their midst together.

J N Darby

Translated from 'Le Messager Evangelique' 1886 Volume 27 page 56.

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MEASUREMENT

2 Corinthians 10: 12-18;

Ephesians 4: 7-16;

Revelation 21: 15-17;

21: 1-3

I would like to say a few words about measurement. Where we read in 2 Corinthians 10, God is said to be the God of measure. He is the God of many other things, too, but He is the God of measure. Then in the epistle to the Ephesians we read of “the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ”. God has found one Man who expresses the standard God ever required from man. What is in view in that passage of scripture is that we are all to arrive at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ. The passage in Revelation 21 speaks of the city and the measurements which are connected with it—length, breadth and height, twelve thousand stadia. There is found in that city that which corresponds perfectly to Christ. The thought of measurement runs through these three scriptures except the last. You cannot put a measurement upon the eternal day. The world to come is measured, but when the day of God comes and eternity is brought in, there are no measurements; no measurements apply there.

There is that which is measured; there is that which is measureless. We sang about it in our hymn:

O God of love, how measureless
Thy thoughts to us are shown!

So they are! When you think of the things which belong to God there is no measurement; we cannot begin to measure them. How could we begin to measure the love of God and the love of Christ? It passes all understanding. Also as to the Spirit it says in the gospel of John that He “gives not the Spirit by measure”, John 3: 34. Then it immediately says, “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand” (v. 35). So you are introduced into what is limitless.

But where we have read we are thinking about measure, something which has come within our range and compass. We can take account of it and measurements apply to it. God works by weight and measure and capacity. You remember in the book of Leviticus where God lays down certain things for His people Israel,

He told them, “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in measure of length, in weight...”, (Leviticus 19: 35). There had to be just measures and weights: “a just ephah, and a just hin” (v. 36). They were the things which God had enjoined for His people Israel. But how much more so for us! Everything has to be in keeping with that.

Now I realise that these scriptures we have read are very profound; they are immensely great and in a way I stand in awe of them. We only know in part; we see through a dim window obscurely. When that which is partial shall be done away we shall know then as we are known but in the meantime we only know things very partially, even the best of us.

God measures the earth; it says in one of the prophets, “He stood, and measured the earth; He beheld, and discomfited the nations” (Habakkuk 3: 6). Why was that? Because they did not come up to His standard of measurement: all have come short “of the glory of God”. Naturally, we have all come short of God’s glory, set out perfectly in Christ. But God has worked with us. The gospel has reached us, we have believed it and so God has something to work upon with every one of us to bring us in line with His thought about us.

God weighs things. Scripture tells us He has fine scales. He weighs actions: “Jehovah is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed” (1 Samuel 2: 3). God weighs people; He weighs the nations and counts them as fine dust on the scales. When I was at school, a long time ago now, the master used to say before we made a measurement on the fine scales, ‘Blow the dust off’. That would have made inaccuracy and that is the force of the word; the nations are esteemed “as the fine dust on the scales” (Isaiah 40: 15). That is all they are in God’s sight.

Then, too, God weighs men. There was a profane king we are told about in the book of Daniel and God put him on the scales and weighed him and he was found wanting. God does not want anyone to be found wanting; He wants us to come up to the standard of His measurement. He is a God of measure.

We know the value of these things in the physical creation. God has set certain laws and He never departs from them. If you take the law of gravity as an example, it always causes things to fall in a certain direction at the same speed and it never varies. God orders for His people in a similar way; He sets certain moral laws amongst them and it is for our good and blessing to keep to those

laws. If I sow to the wind I will reap the whirlwind. That is how things are. Well, that is just by way of introduction. God is the God of measure and God of love.

God has given to us a measure of faith. Every believer in this room has received a measure of grace and a measure of faith. You would not be a believer, you would not be a christian, if you had not those two things. Ephesians speaks about each one of us having “been given grace according to the measure of the gift of the Christ” (Ephesians 4: 7); and in Romans it says, “God has dealt to each a measure of faith” (Romans 12: 3). That is a wonderful thing. As the gospel comes to us we have received faith in order to receive Christ.

Where I have read in 2 Corinthians Paul has much to contend with. He is contending with these false apostles and the teaching which they brought in and other things and he says of them that they were “measuring themselves by themselves”, and that they were not intelligent. Paul filled out his measure that had been given to him in respect of his service toward the Corinthian saints and, indeed, all the saints. Every assembly that Paul established, he filled out the measure which God had given to him in respect of those saints. But these false apostles were vying with him, vying doubtless with one another who could say the best things, perhaps, who could give the best address or preaching. It is a very bad practice to set one ministering servant against another. I do not think the Lord supports it. That is what Paul is contending with and he says, “the God of measure”. Paul filled out the measure that had been given to him in his service to the saints at Corinth. He says, “I have espoused you unto one man, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11: 2). That was what he could do, not what he hoped to arrive at; many other things enter into Paul’s service and come out in these epistles to the Corinthians. But these false teachers and false apostles were competing in their own way with the apostle Paul, belittling him in the eyes of the Corinthian saints and he draws their attention to these things. He draws their attention sometimes, perhaps in folly, to all that he had suffered in order to establish the saints at Corinth in the truth that he had already ministered.

Then in Ephesians 4 you have “the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ”. The truth of Ephesians 4 is that the One who descended into the lower parts of the earth has ascended up above all the heavens, that He might fill all things and He has given gifts to men. We might say, as we read this scripture,

how are we going to reach the “measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ”? Shall we ever arrive at this? When you think of Jesus here you think of what was perfect under the eye of God.

During this last day or two I was thinking how much enters into this matter of measure—things like rule, proportion, time values. You think how balanced the Lord Jesus was here. The disciples were not always balanced but with the Lord Jesus how perfect it was! When He was asked if it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not, think of His answer: “pay then what is Caesar’s to Caesar, and what is God’s to God” (Matthew 22: 17-21). That is balance. It is a feature of manhood and it is a feature, too, that belongs to the growth of the saints till we develop into manhood, “until we all arrive... at the fulness of the Christ”. You might look around and say this is an impossibility. But Christ has gone up on high and is in the place of power and has distributed these gifts—the apostles (foundational), then the prophets to bring the mind of God, then the evangelist too. All these things serve the saints in the present time so you need have no doubts, no misgivings; this is the end that God has in view in these gifts being given, that we all arrive “ at the fulness of the Christ”.

Think of being served by the apostles. We stand to benefit from those who had to do with the inauguration of christianity, those who accompanied the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh, the apostles, those who committed to us the word of God, and then from the gifts coming from the ascended Christ, in order that we might arrive at the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man. That is the end that God has in view and I think we should be encouraged when we think of all that is available to us in the way of gift coming from Christ ascended on high so that this is a possible thing. We might well think, as we look around, that we will never arrive at it but all the saints collectively will be needed to set forth fully the glory of Christ, the One who fills all and in all.

Well, I read that scripture in Revelation 21 to complete the thought of measurement. The measure is a golden reed, the divine standard, and the city comes up to this divine standard, twelve thousand stadia. The length, breadth and height are all equal; this is the grand product of all that God has been working on right down this dispensation from Pentecost to the rapture. We will enter into the formation of this holy city, the new Jerusalem. Where we read first, it is a scene that belongs to the world to come, the city in its administrative capacity, but it comes up to the divine standard. What a city it will be! There is

not a city in this world that can be called holy. There is not a city in this world like this city where everywhere you look you see the tree of life on this side and on that side, all speaking of Christ, composed of this heavenly people—one of the views of the church. I understand there are seven presentations of the church in the New Testament. This is one of them—the city. It shines with purest light; it comes down from heaven; it has the glory of God; it will lighten the scene with its shining; it will administer things for Christ, the holy city, the bride, the Lamb’s wife.

Then we read in the opening verses of that same chapter of the same vessel, “the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall tabernacle with them”. This is the city in its character in the eternal day. As I said earlier, no measurements can be applied when you think of what belongs to eternity. Peter, Paul and John all reach the same end in their own way. John in Revelation says it is a tabernacle of God, dwelling with men. Peter says, “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness”. And Paul says that the Son shall give up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father that God may be all in all. Well, that is the grand end! These are the things which lie just ahead of us. The glory of it, the wonder of it, the surpassing character of it, lie just ahead of us. Think of the saints, those like us, forming a part of this wonderful city which has the glory of God and her shining most precious. She will retain bridal character in perennial freshness throughout the eternal day. It is no wonder we are unable to measure it. But in the meantime things are measurable. We sing a hymn sometimes which says, ‘Each day more to Thy stature grow to Thine eternal praise’.

May this occasion help every one of us to increase in our stature and our growth. “The measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ.” What a cluster of glorious things are connected with the Son of God glorified now at God’s right hand! The saints are going to arrive at it and gifts have been given to that end.

May God bless the word!

J H Rawstrone

Address at Croydon, 21 July, 1984

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.

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