

Living Water

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Ed.

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ENRICHMENT

2 Corinthians 8:9

In the history of this world, there have been many rags to riches stories.

I read in the papers few weeks ago of a man who had been homeless and was selling the "Big Issue" magazine on the streets. He was befriended by a young lady, who was quite well-to-do and educated, and the relationship grew. The end of the story is that they got married and he set up his own business and is now doing very well.

Now that was a wonderful story, but I want to share with you tonight something that is even more wonderful, the story of One who was rich and became poor.

It says here where we read: "He, being rich". I want you to think what that means. Who is this One who was rich? It was Jesus. He was one with God Himself. He spoke of the glory which He had with the Father "before the foundation of the world". All the riches in the world pales into insignificance with the glory and splendour of Jesus. There are glories of Him that we do not even know, things we do not understand. He was rich and He dwelt in glory. In the hymn we have just sung it says:

*"He came from brightest glory,
From radiant courts on high".*

The Bible says that He came from God and He went back to God but between those two events was the cross.

I would like to impress you with the stoop that Jesus made. We don't understand what it was for Jesus to go that way. He dwelt with God. He had the adoration of angels. Then He was the Creator. It says in the scripture, "by Him also the worlds were made". Everything in the universe belongs to Jesus. Everything in this world is His by right. We are told in the scriptures that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof". Everything was created by Him and for Him. It says He looked upon it and behold it was very good. Then He entrusted it to man. God gave Adam responsibility. Man misused that responsibility; he disobeyed. But everything on the earth was the Lord's and it still is. And one day the Lord will reclaim everything. It is still His.

I want to impress you with the power and the glory of the Saviour.

"He being rich", but then it says, He "became poor". There is another scripture which explains far better than I can what that actually meant. In the second chapter of Philippians we are told of seven downward steps which Jesus took. The first

step down was from Godhead glory to become Man. So, we find Jesus, the Son of God, walking this earth as a humble Man. He called Himself the Son of Man because He identified with you and me. Isn't that wonderful? That is the story of the gospel, that the Saviour, though rich, came to walk this earth to identify with you and me. He became poor, literally poor. He said "the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head". The foxes had holes and the birds of the air had roosting places but the Son of Man had nowhere to lay His head. When there was a dispute over Roman taxes He said, "show me a denarius". Oh the poverty of Jesus.

But I think, even more than the literal poverty, He became poor in that He came into the limitations of the human condition. He knew what it was, although He was so rich in glory and power, to humble Himself; He made Himself of no reputation. How different that is from you and me. We like to build up our reputation. The glorious Son of God humbled Himself. Being found in the figure of a man, He humbled Himself and was obedient unto death, and that the death of the cross. Not only obedient unto death but even to such a death as that. What a ghastly death for the glorious Son of God. But that was what God had ordained for your salvation and for mine.

He became poor, says Paul, for our sakes, in order that "ye by his poverty might be enriched". We are poor in the sense, dear friend, that we are bankrupt before God. It is very serious when someone is declared bankrupt. It means that they have nothing to call upon; they have no resources. My dear friend, before God, in your sins, you are bankrupt!

In the story that Jesus told of the two debtors, they were both debtors, one a large debtor and one a smaller debtor, but the point of the story was that they were both in debt and neither had anything to meet the debt with. What did the creditor do? When he saw that they had nothing with which they could pay he frankly forgave them both. That is the story of the glad tidings.

In your sins you are in debt to a holy God. Yes, we must not forget the holiness of God. We must not overlook His righteousness. "It is appointed unto man once to die and after death the judgement". You have to meet God. The cry in the Old Testament was "prepare to meet thy God". Yet you cannot meet God, dear friend, in your sins, unless it is to be judged. God is holy and righteous and therefore your sins need to be dealt with.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if I could tell you that your sins have been dealt with? Well, I can tell you on God's authority that, if you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, your sins can be forgiven. The creditor in the parable freely forgave them

both. It does not matter how much you have sinned or how little; that is the point of the story. If you have sinned against God then you need a Saviour and Jesus has been provided as the One who is able to save you because He has paid the price for your sins so that God is able to forgive righteously.

That is the wonderful character of the gospel. God is able to forgive your sins on a righteous basis because all that was due to you as a sinner has been borne by the blessed Lord Jesus. The judgment of my sins, every one of them, and your sins, if you are trusting in the finished work of Jesus, has been borne by Him.

In the Old Testament we are told that on the day of atonement the high priest laid his hands on the head of the 'scape-goat' and confessed the sins of the people; then the goat was banished into the wilderness, symbolically bearing those sins, and was never to be seen again. If you admit that you are a sinner and put your trust in Jesus, accepting Him as your Saviour, God can rightly forgive all your sins, every one, past, present and future. The hymn says:

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

That is the effectiveness of the work of Jesus; it is able to clear us completely .

The Bible says that He is "able...to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Hebrews:7:25). So we by His poverty have been enriched. How wonderful that is; we have been enriched! It shows that not only my sins have been forgiven but the debt has been cleared. I said earlier that we are all debtors to God, declared bankrupt—what a hopeless state we are in—but God in His grace and mercy sent His Son. He has paid the price, the debt has been cleared, and we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, Can you think of anything as great as that? We through His poverty are enriched.

Those riches last for ever. The millions that businessmen make or that some win on the national lottery will not last. The scripture reminds us that treasures here are subject to rust or even to being stolen. The prophet Haggai speaks of those who earn for a "bag with holes". How quickly riches in the world may slip away! But the riches we come into as trusting in Christ last for ever; they are treasures in heaven.

I would like to challenge you tonight. Where are your riches? Do you have the wonderful riches of eternal life, peace with God, the certain hope of future glory? If you study the scriptures you will find that there are very many things which you will come into as you accept Jesus as your Saviour. We have forgiveness of sins,

eternal life, the gift of the Holy Spirit; we are brought into the church, given a new hope, made kings and priests, and blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. What blessings! What a wonderful exchange that is. How we have been enriched through His poverty! It had to be that way, dear friend.

You cannot get these blessings I have spoken about apart from trusting in the Lord Jesus. They cannot be bought. There is no price I can quote you for these wonderful blessings, for the price has already been paid when Jesus gave His precious life, when He shed His precious blood.

Peter tells us, "we have not been redeemed by corruptible things such as silver or gold". You say, 'I thought gold was pretty incorruptible.' If you look at some of the remains they dig up, ancient Greek or Roman ornaments and the like, they look quite good but they are still tarnished; they are corruptible. We are not redeemed by such things, which are corruptible, but we are redeemed by precious blood. The precious blood of Jesus. What depths He went to. He became poor for our sakes.

I want to end with an appeal. Paul says, and he is writing to christians, and I expect most, if not all here, would claim to be a christian, "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ". I would ask you tonight, 'Do you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ?' Can you say that He being rich became poor for my sake that through His poverty I might be enriched? In the gospel we are dealing with something that is profoundly personal, and I would like to appeal to you tonight, as to whether you know the grace of this glorious Person, the Lord Jesus Christ? It was grace that caused the Lord Jesus to act in this wonderful way in giving Himself for us. It was God Himself coming out to mankind in such a wonderful way, and Paul says "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ".

I trust and pray that each one here tonight, even if never before, may be affected by this grace, and that we may know it for ourselves, and not only know it, but know Him. Paul says, "I know whom I have believed." May we know Him in a personal way, and be more affected by the way He went in grace that we might have eternal riches.

May it be so for His name's sake

Philip White

Hampton 7th February 1999

THE SAVIOUR

At even, ere the sun was set,
The sick, O Lord, around Thee lay;
Oh, in what divers pains they met!
Oh, with what joy they went away!

Once more 'tis even-tide, and we
Oppressed with various ills draw near:
What if Thy form we cannot see?
We know and feel that Thou art here.

O Saviour Christ, our woes dispel:
For some are sick, and some are sad;
And some have never loved Thee well,
And some have lost the love they had;

And some have found the world is vain,
Yet from the world they break not free;
And some have friends who give them pain,
And have not found a friend in Thee.

And none, O Lord, have perfect rest,
And none are wholly free from sin;
And they who fain would serve Thee best
Are conscious most of wrong within.

O Saviour Christ, Thou too art man,
Thou hast been troubled, tempted, tried;
Thy kind but searching glance can scan
The very wounds that shame would hide.

Thy touch has still its ancient power;
No word from Thee can fruitless fall;
Hear in this solemn evening hour,
And in Thy mercy heal us all.

H. Twells.

THE EXCHANGE

"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of
Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8)

If the world were mine and all its store,
And were it of crystal gold;
Could I reign on its throne for evermore
From the ancient days of old,
An empress noble and fair as day,
O gladly might it be,
That I might cast it all away;
Christ, only Christ for me.
For Christ, my Lord, my spirit longs,
For Christ, my Saviour dear,
The joy and sweetness of my songs
The whilst I wander here—
O Lord, my spirit fain would flee
From the lonely desert away to Thee

Matelda of Magdeburg (1212 - 1277)

MARRIED — MADE

In reborn

Marred by sin, but made by grace,

In the Potter's skilful hand,

Suited now to fill the place

Which the Father's counsel planned.

Through the work of Christ made meet,

By the Spirit's power transformed —

To the image of God's Son

Every saint will be conformed!

Image of the heavenly One,

Soon, as heavenly ones we'll hear,

Who, of Adam, were but dust,

Now Christ's glory called to share.

See how great the Father's love,

Wondrous grace on us bestows,

Calling us His children now,

Love in all its fulness flows.

Thus our great and glorious God

For His pleasure now has wrought,

Through redemption brought again

All the lost ones He has sought.

Made again, and given a place,

To the Potter's own design,

Met by mercy, saved by grace,

All the fruit of love divine.

Charles Deayton

· "OUGHT NOT THE CHRIST TO HAVE
SUFFERED AND ENTERED INTO HIS GLORY?"

(Luke 24:26)

Hark the solemn strains uprising!
Sweetly swells the note of praise,
From the chamber where the Saviour
Leads His own the voice to raise.
On the night of His rejection
All is darkness, deep'ning gloom,
As the Son of man goes onward
To the cross, to death and tomb.

Hark, the gentle strains uprising:
Softly swells the note of praise;
All His anguish we remember
As to Him the voice we raise.
All our guilt was laid upon Him—
On God's own beloved Son;
All the waves and billows pouring
O'er His head, He cried, 'Tis done!

Hark the gladsome song uprising;
Louder swells the note of praise;
Lord we hail Thee as the Victor
While to Thee the voice we raise.
Thou whom man cast out, rejected,
Sittest crowned upon God's throne;
Yea, Amen! Thou Lord art worthy!
This we gladly, fully own.

Hark the mighty song uprising!
Loudly swells the note of praise!
Heav'n and earth shall soon adore Thee,
All to Thee their voices raise.
Thou hast loved us, Thou hast washed us
In Thy blood from every stain;
Raise we then the joyful chorus—
Worthy is the Lamb once slain.

J. Revell (1852 - 1900).

THE BELIEVERS' LIBRARY, WENCHI, GHANA

The Believers' Library Service operates from Wenchi, Ghana. This is a rural area in the north of the country, some 500 miles from the capital, Accra. The Library is run by Yaw Badu as part of his service to the Lord. In a recent letter he said: "Our aim is to make Christ known to everyone".

Several people have written from Ghana to say that they have been blessed through borrowing books from the Library. Some of them have come to the Lord through reading this magazine or the Trust's sister publication, "Youthful Days".

A recent letter from Ghana stated:

"I go to the Believers' Library to read "Living Water"...Through your magazine I have come to see that I am a lost sinner and it is Jesus only who can save my soul...I have invited Jesus to be Lord of my life... My family who are pagans are reading "Living Water" when they saw the change in me."

Yaw Badu has requested extra copies of "Youthful Days" and "Living Water". Many of these are to go to a local school, who have requested copies of the magazines.

The Believers' Library also has contact with people in hospitals and prisons.

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 souls.

Ed.

THE BELIEVER'S SPIRIT

Part 3 - The Spirit of a Son

Galatians 4:4-6

“... but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son ... that we might receive sonship. But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba Father”

In the scripture in Galatians 4 the Holy Spirit of God, a divine Person, has been sent forth to take possession of our hearts, for it is only in the power of the Spirit of God that we can enjoy sonship. But as receiving the Spirit of God those who are the sons of God move in the spirit of a son.

Let me illustrate it simply. Let us suppose that we go into a house of a happy well ordered family which we do not know and where there are a considerable number of children, some of them being guests. As we watch them we can distinguish the children which belong to the house from those that are guests by the way that they behave; they show the consciousness of being at home. They unconsciously convey the impression that they belong to the home and are not guests.

It is a great joy to go in and out among a company of believers and to be able to discover without asking questions the spirit of a son, to see the people of God taking their happy places surrounding the Lord Jesus, moving in happy relations with one another, brother as well as sister in the Lord, manifesting unconsciously to each other and to others the spirit of a son enjoying the liberty of sonship, the joys of sonship, the calm consciousness of relationship. All these things indicate unconsciously the spirit of a son. “God sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba Father” that we might enjoy together the spirit of sonship.

We do not want to come together as a congregation. God has given us the light of His family, the light of His house. He has given us His Spirit that there might be a family spirit marking us, that the spirit of sonship might be in evidence, and that as we speak to one another we might speak in the conscious joy of relationships, not in the usual manner and method of society, but as those who have learned the manners of the family of God. What behaviour and deportment flows from the spirit of a son!

Often times we have to judge ourselves, not so much because of what we do, but because of the spirit in which we do it. We might have been righteously indignant about something which has happened; we might say, ‘I knew he was wrong’ and

we might have handled one in such a way that while we were correcting that which was wrong we did it in a spirit that in itself was wrong. The result was that it did not help and only roused the flesh, while the offender was not restored as a result of it. We, too, were chafed in spirit because we handled it, not in the wrong way, but in the wrong spirit.

I would make this suggestion for your consideration. Solomon wrote three books. The first was the book of Proverbs in which, by divine wisdom, he told us how to do things in the right way. He then wrote the book of Ecclesiastes in which the Spirit of God emphasises, through the writing of Solomon, the time to do things—to do things at the right time. But his writings would not have been complete if he had not written a third book—the Song of Songs. This book breathes the spirit of love which tells us the spirit in which to do things. You will agree that the last book is of tremendous importance.

Many a right thing has been done at a wrong time; many a right thing has been done at the right time but in the wrong spirit; if we follow the perfect pathway of the blessed Lord, we find Him doing the right thing at the right time and in the right spirit and it was done perfectly.

We do well to desire His spirit, and to walk humbly before God that we might learn by divinely given wisdom how to do the right thing at the right time, but more important than all, in the right spirit.

We can serve each other well if we can promote with each other an increase in the spirit of Christ, that we might be like Caleb, a man of another spirit. We would then never be mistaken for a man or woman of the world; they would always have to say, 'There is something about that person that is different from the general spirit of the world around'. They may not be able to explain or define it, but the result will be that when they are in trouble they will instinctively turn to the men and women of another spirit for sympathy and for the touch of Christ that their hearts are longing for.

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!

F. S. Marsh

This concludes the series on the believer's spirit.

UNSPOKEN PRAYER

Spoken prayer is audible and normally it is distinct and generally it is public. Unspoken prayer is inarticulate; it is too deep to be voiced in words but it is heard, heard in secret by God.

When passing through seasons of trial and sorrow, when the waterfloods of grief and bereavement overflow the soul, when depressed by one's moral state or circumstances, when the pressure seems well nigh at breaking point, and prayer seems torpid and dead, what a relief it is to know that the priestly eye of Jesus "searches the hearts" (Romans 8:27), eager, as it were, to detect anything that is there for God. He interprets the groanings of the Spirit and makes intercession accordingly. Can He heed a groan? Yes, even a groan!

He counts a groan as prayer. Not only the groanings of the Spirit, which cannot be uttered, but the groanings of our own spirits. A groan may speak anguish or longing desire. We may "groan being burdened" (2 Corinthians 5:4), groan for deliverance. We may likewise groan because what is awaiting us up there is so enchanting that we long to enter into it (2 Corinthians 5:2). "The whole creation groans", and Paul adds, "we also ourselves groan" (Romans 8:22,23).

Sometimes that is all we can do. We may even groan, "O wretched man that I am". But we never add, "Who shall deliver me...?" (Romans 7:24) if we know who He is. But every groan to God is heard. "Lord,...my groanings are not hid from thee" (Psalm 38:9).

Thank God it never is.

He will also heed a sigh. A sigh has not the intensity of a groan yet how affecting it sometimes is. The weeping prophet, Jeremiah, was full of sighs: "I sigh", "her people sigh", "her priests sigh", "my sighs are many" (Lamentations 1:21, 11, 4, 22). The Saviour often sighed, yes, "He sighed deeply" (Mark 8:12).

*For ever on Thy burdened heart,
A weight of sorrow hung,
Yet no rebellious murmuring word
Escaped Thy silent tongue.*

The Psalms breath His sighs. They reveal what Jesus felt as He suffered. In the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) we have figures or illustrations; in the prophets, the forecasts; in the gospels, the facts; in the epistles, the fruits; but in the Psalms, we have the feelings of Christ as He suffered.

Every sigh He heaved was to God, and, like the frankincense of the meat-offering, it went up to God. Every divinely prompted sigh we utter to God is heard and it may mean more to Him than ten-thousand words however eloquent. "For the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord." (Psalm 12:5).

He heeds also a tear. The great men of the Bible were often great weepers—Joseph, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah. "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). The Man of sorrows mingled His tears with those of His bereaved and beloved ones. He wept, too, over Jerusalem. He wept also in other ways—ways too mysterious for us to understand (Hebrews 5:7). Oh let us ponder His tears!

While guarding against natural sentiment, yet we should cultivate spiritual emotions. A tear in the eye of a child may be very appealing and do what words fail to do. God treasures the tears of His people. He has a bag for their transgressions, a book for their thoughts and words, and a bottle for their tears (Job 14:17, Malachi 3:16, Psalm 56:8). David was not satisfied with a divine record of his tears being kept—he wanted them preserved; "Put my tears into thy bottle."

John Bunyan said that he liked to see 'Mr Wet-Eyes' among the saints. I once saw a brother in tears at a prayer meeting, though he spoke not a word. I murmured 'Amen' to his unspoken prayer. The woman of Luke 7 said nothing with her lips, but her tears said a good deal. Paul speaks of his "many tears" (2 Corinthians 2:4). John wrote: "I wept much" (Revelation 5:4). Timothy was in tears about the testimony of our Lord (2 Timothy 1:4, 8). We need to steep the gospel seed in tears (Psalm 126:6). Who can estimate the worth and power of a tear shed before God in prayer?

Then there is a look. Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple: "when they shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and shall spread forth his hands toward this house" (I Kings 8:38). What a mute appeal! How many a pious Israelite, in captivity or alienation from God's house, feeling the plague of his own heart, and otherwise oppressed, looked towards God's house, and got blessing.

We can look toward heaven—to a Person. "They looked unto him, and were enlightened" (Psalm 34:5)—that is the way of relief and happiness. Try it, dear troubled one. Perhaps you say, 'I have looked, but I got no relief'. Look again! Look till your spiritual vision becomes calm and clear. Jonah said when in the belly of the fish, "I will look again toward thy holy temple", and he did. Then he was able to add, "And my prayer came in unto thee" (Jonah 2:3-7).

Then there is a desire. How cheering and reviving it is that even a desire can cleave the mighty space between earth and heaven and be heard above. "Jehovah, thou hast heard the desire of the meek" (Psalm 10:17). Every desire born in the renewed affections after Him is cherished and fostered by Him. "Lord, all my desire is before thee" (Psalm 38:9).

Are we so overwhelmed that we cannot even groan or sigh; so low that we cannot give vent to even a tear or a look; so utterly cold, inert and hopeless that the soul feels that it is prayerless? Yet surely there must be a desire after God if there is life! Beloved, that is prayer! "With my soul have I desired thee in the night" (Isaiah 26:9). Amid the impenetrable gloom that may sometimes surround us, when the soul seems shut out from God, and the heavens seem like brass, when there is neither moon nor stars to lighten the darkness of our night—then, even then, we can rest in a quiet waiting, heaven-wrought desire after God, and be encouraged by knowing that even the desire of the heart is graciously heeded and interpreted by Him as unspoken prayer.

S. J. B. Carter

FOUR ASPECTS OF THE WORK ON THE CROSS

1. Delivered for our offences

"Jesus our Lord... who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25).

God has provided a Person capable of bearing sins and their judgment in such a way that the holiness of God, instead of being against the sinner who believes, is absolutely in his favour. We see at the cross the infinite holiness of God in His judgment of our sins but we see that judgment falling upon the One who bears it in voluntary self-sacrifice and devoted love in order that we may be justified and have peace with God.

He gave Himself for our sins, bearing them in His own body on the tree, and by Himself He purged them. Has He removed them all? Certainly! If you remember who He was, you can have no question at all as to the value and efficacy of His

work. If any great work has to be done, satisfaction and confidence as to it are based upon knowing the competency of the person engaged in it. Think of the glory of the Person who “was delivered for our offences”! What failure can there be in a work undertaken by the Son of God? After such a Person has done such a work, God can say righteously about the sins of believers: “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17).

God has “raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead”. Our Saviour is completely out of the death and judgment that He went into “for our offences”, and in God’s account every believer is as clear as He is. Knowing this we are justified by faith and “have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

2. **Condemned sin in the flesh**

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh”(Romans 8:3).

The truth contained in this verse has to do with what we are and not with what we have done. We should all be prepared to admit that we have done many wrong things but this outflow of evil must have a source. So much bad fruit could never have been produced by a good tree. What we have done is the outcome of what we are. Now, as to this, it is written, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18). The Scriptures declare this and, sooner or later, the experience of every converted person will confirm it. I remember a young man saying to me, after some days of deep soul trouble on what seemed likely to be his death bed, ‘The Lord has been showing me what I am. I knew before that there was a lot of bad in me, but I never saw until now that there is no good’. This is a solemn but needful lesson.

The very existence of “sinful flesh” was a great dishonour to God. That man—the special object of God’s heart—should be found in a condition of sin and in such a state that for the eye of God there is in him “no good thing” is an appalling fact. What could be done with “sinful flesh” for God’s credit and glory? The material was too bad for any remedy to be successful. The law might be applied to it and might detect evil but could neither put it right nor remove it to the glory of God. The verse I have read shows how God dealt with sinful flesh. He has condemned sin in the flesh and made an end of it in the death of His Son. The man in whom no good dwells was ended before God in the death of Christ. Sinful flesh has been removed in judgment from before God at the cross.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14 & 15).

The devil has no power beyond death—not even over the lost. People get hold of fictitious poetical ideas and picture him reigning over an infernal kingdom beyond death but in truth the devil will be for ever the most abject of all lost creatures. His kingdom is bounded by the grave; his territories stretch down to death but there they end. God allowed the devil to have the power of death and to wield it in a reign of terror over the consciences of men. Idolatry, superstition and priestcraft exercise their dark tyranny over thousands of millions of the human race and the secret of their dominion is the fear of death, with the power of the devil behind it.

Then again, when the conscience of the sinner is awakened by the Spirit of God, the fear of death lays hold of the soul in heavy irons and cruel bondage. I expect that most, if not all, of us here have known something of this. There is a terrible reality in death. It is a dark, black cloud which comes over everything that we have and are as children of Adam. It is the blighting of every natural hope and the desolation of every earthly prospect. It is the complete break-up of our whole status as in the flesh. If ever the true thought of what death is has come home to you, you know right well that it filled your conscience with solemn fear. There is but one way of deliverance from the fear of death and that is by the knowledge of this precious Saviour, who went into death for us.

Jesus has tasted death in all its bitterness and reality as the wages of sin, the power of the devil, and the judgment of God. He has entered into it fully as none other ever could, that He might deliver us for ever from its fear. He has gone under all that power of darkness that He might annul it for you and me.

Satan cannot touch that which survives death. If you have become possessed of that which is on the other side of death, you have that which Satan cannot touch. Thank God! Jesus is risen. It is a Saviour who has been into death for us but is now for ever beyond it who is the righteousness, life, and joy of the believer. All our blessings are in the One who is beyond death. These are the “sure mercies” of Acts 13:34, and there are no other sure mercies. You may lose your money, your position, your abilities, your friends, your health; indeed there is nothing sure this side of death but everything is sure that is on the other side. Nothing can fail or break down that we have in a risen Saviour.

4. :

What has been done for God

“Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour”.
(Ephesians 5:2)

I have read this scripture that we may not lose sight of the infinite preciousness of the work of Christ to God. He was under judgment and in death but He was there for the glory of God and there in the perfection of divine affections. His devotedness to God and His love to the Father were never so expressed as when He gave Himself for us. He brought the obedience and the affections of the Son into the place of sin and judgment and death and this made His work an offering and a sacrifice of “sweet smelling savour”. The hymn expresses it:

*‘Love, that on death’s dark vale .
Its sweetest odours spread,
Where sin o’er all seemed to prevail,
Redemption’s glory shed.’*

Christ has been offered up and by His death sins have been purged, sin in the flesh has been condemned, the believer perfected for ever and God glorified. Perfect assurance and peace must be the portion of everyone who looks by faith on that scene of holy judgment and learns that everything has been settled thus according to the glory of God. In view of that scene, and of the risen Saviour who is now triumphantly out of it, darkness, doubt and fear are banished from the heart and the conscience is filled with perfect peace.

Charles A Coates.

THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS FULNESS

If Christ sets Himself to gain the church He must gain her affections...There is the initial act, “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25), but there is a process which succeeds that, and the object of it is that He may gain the affections of the church and present it to Himself according to Himself. That is the work which is going on at this moment.

Now that the truth of Christ and the church is made known you can understand the bond of man and wife; in Old Testament days there was excuse, and you read of plurality of wives, but now there is no excuse: the true character of the bond is seen now.

Neither could you understand the truth of the church except as you saw what the Lord was in the midst of His disciples. No amount of doctrine will give it to you. You must see the tenderness of the Lord to His disciples, and the way He came down to their capacities and His affection for them, to understand what the Lord could be to the company now.

...my conviction is that in the present day it is the special line of truth which John opens up as to the revelation of the Father and the Son, and the gift of eternal life and the Holy Spirit, which brings souls into the truth of Philadelphia; and when you have got there you have really returned to the point of departure, to the truth of the church.

Nothing can be more important than to understand that the church was left here as a witness in the absence of Christ. The Bridegroom is in heaven, and the bride on earth; the church should be mourning the absence of the Bridegroom, and yet have the Bridegroom dwelling in the heart by faith; that is the true position of the church. Not going in the current of the world, not overcome by the power of present things, but in a sense desolate in the absence of the Bridegroom, and yet not desolate because Christ is dwelling in the heart by faith. The practical effect would be the Bridegroom set forth in the bride, and at the same time the bride entirely taken up with the interests of the Bridegroom. That is what I understand by Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, and for that everything depends on the appreciation of Christ.

I take up the address to Thyatira on account of there being one peculiar feature about it, and that is that, out of the seven addressed, this is the church in which you get for the last time the recognition of the church as a whole...Thyatira is the last church representing the whole as on the ground of responsibility. What becomes of it? "I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Revelation 2:23). Being connected with the church system was no longer a ground of security; judgment was to be according to their works. What a state the church must have lapsed into when the Lord had to present Himself in that way, for that is the way that He presents Himself to the world.

What comes out in John 10 is John's peculiar way of presenting the church. Paul would tell you of the body and the Head, but John tells you about the sheep and the Shepherd. It is the same thing, the same persons are spoken of—they present the same thing in different lights.

The church is the vessel of testimony. I do not ignore the gifts, but we must not ignore the church as the vessel of testimony.. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18). Nothing that came out in Christ should be lacking, but all come out in the church.

...in Christ and the church the bond is affection. His pre-eminence is the pre-eminence of affection.

If you get a right idea of the church, it is to be the vessel in which there will be the full setting forth of the grace of God.

The..."church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). The heavenly city is one aspect of the church, and the church of the firstborn another aspect. One is connected with the ministry of the twelve and the other with the work of Paul. It is interesting, if, as is probable, Paul was the writer of this epistle (Hebrews), that he gives place here to the work and ministry of the twelve. They built the heavenly city; their names are in the foundations; they were building the church while Paul was persecuting. Their testimony was of Christ exalted, and it is that testimony that brings in the heavenly city.

It is great assumption to imagine that we can set up a representation of the church. The tendency with man, if he has any sense of the failure of the church, is to begin again, to try and set up a sort of pattern of what the church originally was. It has been said that if we are testimony to anything it is to the ruin of the church, but people do not quite like that; they want to be 'a local expression' of something. It is humiliating to be a testimony to a ruin!... No greater mistake can be made if the church is in ruins than to attempt to set up anything, but if you have apprehended the ruin you can stand apart from what is contrary to the Lord, and be guided by the light which was from the beginning, without making any pretension to ecclesiastical order.

The general principle of Peter's testimony is that the saints were to be partakers of the sufferings; and if they were, they would be partakers also of the glory... The great principle by which the church has been formed as the bride, the Lamb's wife, is by the testimony of Peter, which involved that the saints would suffer with Christ and be partakers of His glory.

F. E. Raven

Extracted from "Handing on the Torch". This book is available in English and Spanish from the Stone Publishing Trust. See the back page for details.

HOW TO KNOW THE WILL OF THE FATHER

People would like a convenient and comfortable means of knowing God's will, as one might get a recipe for anything; but there exists no means of ascertaining the will of God without reference to the state of our own soul. Moreover, we are often of too much importance in our own eyes; and we deceive ourselves in supposing some will of God in such or such a case. God perhaps has nothing to tell us thereon, the evil being altogether in the stir we give ourselves. The will of God is perhaps that we should take quietly an insignificant place.

Further, we sometimes seek God's will, desiring to know how to act in circumstances in which His only will is that we should not be found in such circumstances at all; and where, if conscience were really in activity, its first effect would be to make us leave them. It is our own will which sets us there, yet we should like nevertheless to enjoy the comfort of being guided of God in a path which we ourselves have chosen. Such is a very common case.

Be assured that, if we are near enough to God, we shall not be at a loss to know His will. In a long and active life it may happen, that God, in His love, may not always reveal His will to us, so that we may feel our dependence. This is particularly so where the individual has the tendency to act according to his own will. However, "if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light"; whence it is certain that, if the whole body is not full of light, the eye is not single. You will say: 'That is a poor consolation'. I answer that it is a rich consolation for those whose sole desire is to have the eye single and to walk with God.

"If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him". It is always the same principle. "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". You cannot exempt yourself from this moral law of Christianity. "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing by the knowledge of God." The connection of these things is of immense importance for the soul. The Lord must be known intimately if one would walk in a way worthy of Him; and it is thus that we grow in the knowledge of God's will. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." Finally, it is written that the spiritual man, "judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man".

It is then the will of God, and a precious will, that we should be able to discern it only according to our own spiritual state. In general, when we think that we are judging circumstances, it is God who is judging us - judging our state. Our business is to keep close to Him. God would not be good to us, if He permitted us to discover His will without that. It might be convenient just to have a director of consciences; and we should thus be spared the discovery and the chastisement of our moral condition. Thus, if you seek how you may discover the will of God without that, you are seeking evil; and that is what we see every day.

One christian is in doubt, in perplexity; another, more spiritual, sees as clear as the day, he sees no difficulty, and ends by understanding that it lies only in the other's state of soul. "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off".

Guidance by circumstances

As regards circumstances, I believe that a person may be guided by them: Scripture tells us so. That is what is meant by being "held in with bit and bridle"; whereas the promise and privilege of him who has faith is; "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye".

God who is faithful has given the promise of directing us thus -near enough to God to understand by a single glance from Him. He warns us not to be as the horse and the mule which have no understanding of the will, thoughts, or desires of their master. It is needful to hold them in with bit and bridle. Doubtless even that is better than to stumble, fall and run counter to Him who holds us in; but it is a sad state, and such it is to be guided by circumstances. Undoubtedly, too, it is merciful on God's part so to act, but very sad on ours.

A distinction must however be drawn between judging what one has to do in certain circumstances, and being guided by them. He who allows himself to be guided by them always acts in the dark as to knowing the will of God. There is absolutely nothing moral in it; it is an external force that so constrains. Now it is very possible that I may have no judgment beforehand of what I shall do: I do not know what circumstances may arise, and consequently I can make no resolutions. But the instant the circumstances are there, I judge with a full and divine conviction what is the path of God's will, and the Spirit's intention and power. That demands the highest degree of spirituality. It is not to be directed by circumstances, but to be directed by God in them, being near enough to God to be able to judge immediately what one ought to do, as soon as the circumstances are there.

Guidance through impressions

As to impressions, God can suggest them, and it is certain that in fact He does suggest a thing to the mind; but, in that case, the propriety of the thing and its moral character will be as clear as the sun at noon-day.

In prayer God can remove from our heart certain carnal influences, which, being destroyed, leave room for certain spiritual influences taking all their place in the soul. Thus He makes us feel the importance of some duty, which has been perhaps entirely obscured by pre-occupation caused by some desired object.

This may work out between two individuals. One person may not have enough spiritual discernment to discover what is right; but the moment another shows it to him, he understands that it is the truth. All are not engineers, but a simple waggoner knows a good road when it is made. Thus the impressions which come from God do not always remain simple but they are ordinarily clear when God produces them. I do not doubt, however, that He often makes them on our minds, when we walk with Him and listen to His voice.

The hindrances of Satan

When obstacles raised up of Satan are spoken of, it is not said that God Himself may not have allowed these obstacles to some good desire - obstacles caused by the accumulation of evil in the circumstances which surround us.

Again the case should never exist of a person acting without knowing the will of God. The only rule that can be given is, never to act when we do not know what is the Lord's will. The will of God ought to be the motive as well as the rule of our conduct; and until His will is in activity, there is an absence of any true motive for ours. If you act in ignorance in this respect, you are at the mercy of circumstances; however God may turn all to the good of His children. But why act when we are ignorant of what His will is? Is the necessity of acting always so extremely pressing? If I do something with the full certainty that I am doing the will of God, it is clear that an obstacle is no more than a test of my faith, and it ought not to stop me. It stops us perhaps through our lack of faith; because, if we do not walk sufficiently near to God in the sense of our nothingness, we shall lack faith to accomplish what we have faith enough to discern.

When we are doing our own will or are negligent in our walk, God in His mercy may warn us by a hindrance which arrests us if we pay attention to it, whilst "the simple pass on and are punished". God may permit, where there is much activity and labour, that Satan should raise up hindrances, in order that we may be kept in

dependance on the Lord; but God never permits Satan to act otherwise than on the flesh. If we leave the door open, if we get away from God, Satan does us harm; otherwise it is a mere trial of faith to warn us of a danger or snare - of something that would tend to exalt us in our own eyes. It is an instrument for our correction. That is, God allows Satan to trouble the mind, and make the flesh suffer outwardly, in order that the inner man may be kept from evil.

If it is a question of anything else, probably it is only our 'buts' and 'ifs' that stop us, or possibly the effects of our carelessness, which has opened a door to Satan to trouble us by doubts and apparent difficulties between God and us, because we do not see more clearly. For "he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not". In a word, the question is wholly moral.

If any particular question is raised which at the first blush we cannot solve, we shall find that often there would be no such question there at all, if our position were not false—if we had previously been in a good state of soul, and a true spirituality had guarded and kept us. In that case, all we have to do is to humble ourselves for the whole affair.

Guidance from the Scriptures

Now let us examine whether Scripture does not present some principle suitable to direct us. Here evidently spirituality is the essential thing—is everything. The rule that we should do what Jesus would have done in such and such a circumstance is excellent, where and when it can be applied. But are we often in the circumstances where the Lord was found?

In the next place, it is often useful to ask myself whence comes a particular desire of mine, or such a thought of doing this or that. I have found that this alone decides more than half of the difficulties that Christians meet with. The rest of those that remain are the result of our haste and of our former sins. If a thought comes from God and not from the flesh, then we have only to address ourselves to God as to the manner and means of executing it; and we shall soon be directed.

There are cases where one has need of being guided, not always without motives; as suppose, when I hesitate about a visit to make, or some such other case. A life of more ardent love, or love exercised in a more intelligent way, or set in activity in drawing near to God, will clear the motives on one side or another: and often, perhaps, we shall see that our part in the thing was but selfishness.

If it be asked, 'But if it is no question either of love or obedience?' then I answer, that you ought to show me a reason for acting. For if it is nothing but your own

will, you cannot make the wisdom of God bend to your will. Therein also is the source of another numerous class of difficulties that God will never solve. In these cases, He will in His grace teach obedience, and will show us how much time we have lost in our own activity. Finally, "the meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek he will teach his way".

I have communicated to you on this subject all that my mind can furnish you with at this moment.

For the rest, remember only that the wisdom of God conducts us in the way of God's will: if our own will is in activity, God cannot bend to that. That is the essential thing to discover. It is the secret of the life of Christ. I know no other principle that God can make use of, however He may pardon and cause all to work for our good. If there still be a query as to His direction, He directs the new man which has no other will than Christ. He mortifies and puts to death the old man, and in that way purifies us that we may bear fruit. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God...I delight to do thy will." It is the place of a porter to wait at the gate; but, in doing so, he does the will of his master. Be assured that God does more in us than we do for Him; and that what we do is only for Him in proportion as it is He Himself who works in us.

I add with regard to a principle expressed above, that we are sanctified to the "obedience...of Jesus Christ". Now He came to do the will of His Father, without which He did nothing. Thus, in the temptation in the wilderness, Satan tried to make Him act according to His own will, in things where there was not even an appearance of evil. The Father had just owned Him as His Son: Satan tempted Him, saying, "If thou be Son of God, command that these stones be made bread". But Jesus was a servant, and His answer consists in doing nothing, because there was wholly no will of His Father in the matter: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." As there was no word from God for the actual circumstances, Jesus did nothing. Satan could do nothing more.

Although ever active to do good, our Lord did not stir, when Mary and Martha sent to tell Him: "he whom thou lovest is sick". His Father had not sent Him there. When He goes later, the wisdom of God is thus manifested, in that a testimony to the divine power of Jesus as the Son of God was rendered by the resurrection of Lazarus.

So then, when the will of God is not manifested, our wisdom often consists in waiting until it should be. It is the will of God that, zealous of good works, we

should do good always, but we cannot go before the time, and the work of God is done perfectly when it is He who does it.

J. N. Darby

The Stone Publishing Trust

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