

No. 39

Living Water

'Living Water' is published by the Stone Publishing Trust
(Registered Charity 1034689)

'The Eagles', Headcorn Road, Staplehurst, Kent, TN12 0BU

If you know of any one who might be interested in receiving this magazine, please pass their name and address to the Stone Publishing Trust. Copies of the next few issues will be sent to them free of charge.

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 in 'Living Water' are normally from the Darby translation or from the Authorised (King James) Version.

All articles are copyright to the Stone Publishing Trust. Copyright is claimed on the advice of the Charity Commission and to protect the rights of others. Trust policy is to allow reproduction of articles for the work of the Lord wherever this is possible.

Articles are sometimes shortened or otherwise amended and for this the editor takes full responsibility.

Editor: Mark Lemon

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

Living Water — Issue No. 39

Recent Teaching

Page

“OCCUPY THYSELF WITH THESE THINGS; BE WHOLLY IN THEM”	Eric McPhail	4
ANSWERED PRAYER	Keith Wickens	11

Poetry Selection

MARRIAGE IN THE LORD	N. Anderson	14
GRACE	T. Kelly	15
HE MAKETH NO MISTAKE	A. M. Overton	15

Testimony Section

DIRECTION FROM THE LORD	Hilardio V. Caro Meza	16
-------------------------	-----------------------	-----------

A Voice from the past

CONFIDENCE (Continuing the series of meditations on Psalm 23)	J. Revell	17
THE SIGN OF JONAS	Hugh Martin	19

A Word for Today

THE CHURCH IN FOUR ASPECTS— 1. THE BODY (The first of a series of four articles)	F. E. Raven	21
--	-------------	-----------

“OCCUPY THYSELF WITH THESE THINGS; BE WHOLLY IN THEM”

(1 Timothy 4:15)

Luke 2:49

Acts 9:1-6

2 Samuel 6:1-12

Malachi 3:16-17

Introduction

There is an exhortation given by Paul to Timothy, “occupy thyself with these things; be wholly in them, that thy progress may be manifest to all” (1 Timothy 4:15). I am sure that exhortation would apply not only to Timothy but to us now. We are in a day when it can be said that “all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 2:21). Yet it is also a time for encouraging one another that we might be wholly in things that command the interest and pleasure of heaven. It says in the Proverbs that the path of the righteous is as the shining light, going on and brightening until the day be fully come (Proverbs 4:18). Surely each one of us here tonight would love to be going on like that.

The Example of the Lord

If we want an example of One who was committed to the will of God above all others, our hearts are drawn to the preciousness and perfection of the pathway of the Son of God. In Luke chapter 2, we find the earliest recorded words of the Lord, “did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father’s business?” Our hearts can contemplate Jesus at twelve years of age, occupied in His Father’s business. That committal marked Him not only at that age but throughout His life. It was manifested in public but was true in secret. He could say: “I do always the things that are pleasing to him” (John 8:29). Towards the close of His life He said in that wonderful prayer recorded in John’s gospel, “I have glorified thee on the earth, I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it” (John 17:4).

If we contemplate His committal, the closing scenes of His pathway particularly command our interest and adoration. Think of what was pressing on His spirit when He could say, “My Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; but not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). Oh, to have some greater appreciation of the holy dedication of Jesus. Every moment of every day His ear was attuned to the Father’s direction at every turn to accomplish the will of God.

Amidst scenes of greatest opposition, we see Him going forward in love's committed way to Calvary's cross. Your blessing and mine depended on the holy committal of the Saviour. Think of the energy of devotion that marked Him. Nothing turned Him aside. May it attract our hearts and stimulate them as contemplating One whose every moment was for the pleasure of God.

Our hearts are drawn to the Saviour. Do we all know Him? Do we all love Him? I trust so, since if we are to be here, in some sense wholly committed to the will of God and for His pleasure, then we must start by coming to know the blessed One who did everything for the will of God.

Think of what He accomplished for God at Calvary's cross, when He suffered "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). What a sacrifice! What a glorious Saviour for our trust, for our contemplation, for our appreciation today.

A poet said:

*'If the Saviour's won your heart
And for heaven you've made a start,
Keep your eye upon the chart,
And go on!'*

It is the time for every lover of Jesus to be going on. Our hearts adore Him for that sacrifice on the cross. Let us ever appreciate it and remember what it cost Jesus that we might be redeemed, that we might be here for the pleasure of God, for the praise of our glorious Saviour.

An individual committed to the Lord

I read in Acts chapter 9 because we have there the conversion of an individual who was wholly opposed to Christ. There was no one so opposed to Christ as Saul of Tarsus was. But the power of God's gospel, that light that was above the brightness of the sun, brought down that proud Pharisee and secured him as a mighty trophy of divine grace and Paul in his pathway here in testimony to his Saviour was wholly in things.

In Acts chapter 9 two things laid hold of Saul as the result of his conversion on the Damascus road and they never left him. One was a tremendous impression of the grace of God that had secured him. Then secondly, he never lost the sense that he had been brought down and come under the will and the sway of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that if we are to be wholly in things that command the pleasure of our Saviour we must first come to know and appreciate what He has done for us.

John writes: "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood" (Revelation 1:5). Peter tells us that we have been redeemed not by

corruptible things such as silver and gold but by precious blood, the blood of the Lamb (see 1 Peter 1:19). Paul himself tells us that we have been secured for the praise of the glory of divine grace (see Ephesians 1:6). I believe we need to understand what the Saviour has done for us. We have been forgiven much. Are we fifty pence debtors? Or are we five hundred? (Luke 7:40-42). Surely any soul constrained by the love of Christ would gladly take the place of a five hundred pence debtor and enjoy the blessedness of divine favour, secured joyfully for the praise of the glory of our God.

Saul was so zealous in a certain way; you might say nothing could stop him on that mission to Damascus. Yet there is no case too hard for Jesus. Let the power of God's grace freshly affect all our hearts that we might not be hard hearted but those whose hearts are kept soft by the power and blessing of the grace of God.

We owe everything to the Saviour, the One who suffered at Calvary's cross, shedding His precious blood that we might be redeemed. The writer of all these great epistles, Paul, never forgot it. Let us ever remember the preciousness of the love, the grace, the blessing and favour that have been shown towards us that we should be secured for God's pleasure now. I believe if that were to weigh more with us, and the value that has been placed on each one of us by the Saviour in giving Himself for us, it would cause our hearts to be drawn forward in precious committal in these days to our blessed Lord and Master.

There is not only the fact that we know Him as Saviour (wonderful as that is and let no one here be without it) but it is absolutely essential if we are to be here in any measure for the pleasure of God as individuals, in our households or in our local companies that our wills must be subdued. That was another lesson that Saul of Tarsus learned on the Damascus road. He says there, "Who art thou, Lord?" He came under the sway of the Lord—another Master. Let us too come under the sway of the Lord Jesus and recognise that He has claims over us. He is the One who has shown wondrous love and blessing towards us in securing us and He would take charge completely. May we recognise Him in this way for there is blessing for believers in the Lord Jesus in coming under His sway.

Paul never lost the sense of it. What motivated him in his spiritual life and his zeal of spiritual energy? In the Philippian epistle he gives us the answer. He is pursuing; he is going on. He is consumed with, "The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8). Oh, the blessedness of it. Paul was occupied with the glory of the One who had taken possession of him and filled his heart. How are you and I going to get on in a world that hates Christ? How are we going to be here in testimony to our Lord and Master? The world has crucified Him; the verdict is still the same. The preciousness of the One who has done so much for us, who has wondrous claims on us, would cause our hearts to

be set with spiritual energy and zeal in the pathway of testimony to Christ.

How much the Holy Spirit is needed for this. The world is against Christ and if we are to be here for Christ in our daily tasks, as individuals or in our households, we need the power and help that comes not only from our Lord and Master, but we need the power of the Holy Spirit of God—the indwelling power of a mighty divine Person. You can be assured of the reality of what it says in John’s epistle: “greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). How precious to have these assurances.

If we are to be wholly in the things of the Lord we need to know our Saviour and to love Him more. I remember someone saying, many years ago, ‘There is always room for loving Jesus more; there is always room for coming under His blessed sway’. I believe Paul is the example par excellence of a lover of Christ, particularly in the energy and zeal he demonstrated in his committal to the testimony of his Lord.

In Philippians Paul speaks of, “Christ Jesus **my** Lord”. Paul had done some accounting in relation to his activities and he tells the Philippians that he put certain things aside, counting them filth and loss and we may have to do that as coming under the sway of the Lord. But what thrilled Paul’s heart was, “the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Christ was his object, Christ his goal. Surely each one of us would say that in greater measure we need to make Christ our object and goal. That is the secret of being wholly in things that our progress may be manifest to all.

A household for the Lord

In the second book of Samuel where we read we find two households. There is the house of Abinadab and there is the house of Obed-Edom. One is a little area of brightness for encouragement in a dark day and that is what we would surely want for every house where Jesus is treasured, a little area of brightness in the darkness of this world.

The ark of God is spoken of here. The ark, to put it simply, would be a type to our hearts of the Lord Jesus. It is clear it was very precious in the house of Obed-Edom, but I think it was treated very casually in the house of Abinadab. It does not actually tell us how long it was there but it is reckoned that it was possibly there for up to 60 years.

Abinadab had two sons, Ahio and Uzzah, and, where we read, they are part of the procession that was bringing up the ark. You say, ‘That is a fine thing, to think of bringing up the ark’, but then God has in mind that things are to be done after the due order. That is, there has to be due regard and reverence for the things of the Lord Jesus and for the blessed Person of Christ. His Person is

assailed in this world today. The holy humanity of Jesus calls forth from the infidel mind of man the most appalling blasphemies. But each one of us here as lovers of Jesus would surely be set to treasure the things of Christ.

The ark is carried here on a new cart. That was a Philistine idea; it was not of God at all. Ahio goes before the ark and Uzzah seeks to keep things right but there is no true regard or feeling for what was proper to the ark, typically to the Person of the Lord Jesus. In contrast, with Obed-Edom you find that the ark is clearly regarded with favour and appreciation since God's blessing came upon the house. That is the distinction. In Abinadab's house there was perhaps casual indifference linked with an outward acknowledgment of the ark but in the house of Obed-Edom the ark was a treasured possession. There was a treasure in that house—an appreciation of Christ.

Let us be wholly in things in regard of treasuring an appreciation of Christ in our households. It is something that God looks for. Let those of us who are responsible for households be set to ensure that what speaks of Christ and His Person and interests are treasured in our households in a practical way. The reading of the scriptures and prayer together are practical matters which show that we are committed to the interests of Christ and we can be assured that this will draw out God's blessing.

The ark remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite three months and Jehovah blessed Obed-Edom and all his household. It says later, in verse 12, "it was told king David, saying, Jehovah has blessed the house of Obed-Edom, and all that is his, because of the ark of God". The treasuring of what is peculiarly pleasurable to God in the households of believers today is something that we should understand. It brings out divine recognition and blessing.

We see how households were important in the beginning of the present dispensation. Think of the blessing that came to the Philippian jailer's household; Christ, in wonderful grace, was appreciated there. At the close of the second epistle to Timothy we read of Aquila and Priscilla; they had a household and clearly the interests of Christ were appreciated there. The house of Onesiphorus is another example; that was a house that knew something of the reproach of the testimony of Christ, suffering no doubt for His name; the ark was cherished there. What is of Christ is always cherished by God and, as He looks down, God appreciates and God values. I do not think we can over-emphasise how God puts a premium on households today that are set for the maintenance of an appreciation of His beloved Son and all that that means to Him.

So let us encourage one another. No act of devotion on the part of those who love Christ in promoting His interests is overlooked in heaven and certainly draws forth God's blessing. What an oasis the households of God's people are in

the arid desert of this world. Let them be places where increasingly the interests of Christ are cherished and where God may in His own way direct persons who are interested in the things of the Lord to learn something of the treasures that are held in the hearts of His own.

A company wholly for the Lord

Malachi is another bright spot in a very difficult and dark day. There had been recovery but there was a sad time in Malachi when the prophet had to say, “Will a man rob God?” (Malachi 3:8). How much God is robbed of today. If you read the prophet you see how he is very solemn in his condemnation of what professed God’s name at that time. Well, we may have a judgement of these things, of what may outwardly profess God’s name, but let the exhortation in Timothy come home to each one of us to be wholly in things.

In Malachi we read of persons who were meeting together and they thought upon God’s name. Does that not command heaven’s interest? Of course it does. God had said earlier, “prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I open not to you the windows of the heavens, and pour you out a blessing, till there be no place for it” (Malachi 3:10). God’s disposition to provide the richest of blessings was not changed at all.

There is the same disposition today. The resource and supply is undiminished. Today this world in all its wickedness is going on to judgement but God’s disposition is to bless, whether it be an individual through the gospel or households where the interests of Christ are recognised or where lovers of Jesus are gathered to His name. At the close of the christian dispensation, after nearly 2000 years of the glorious supply of grace in Christ and the Spirit, God is still willing to pour out a blessing to superabundance. Does it not stimulate our hearts?

There is no diminution in the divine supply. Public breakdown, public sorrow, scattering of many dear saints of God, these things are all true, but there is One who remains. Haggai says, “The word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit, remain among you: fear ye not” (Haggai 2:5). What encouragement. Well, it says where we read “then they that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another”. What a happy occupation these persons had. Notice the words—they spoke often one to another. Jehovah observed it and heard and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared Jehovah.

It is very interesting that Jehovah observed and heard. God takes account of things. Nothing is overlooked by God and we need to be encouraged in these things. You may say, ‘ Well, I only meet with a few fellow christians. It is not easy where I live. We have to meet in a house; we have to overcome a lot of difficulties and we have to travel a bit’. Ah, what does it say here? Jehovah

observed it, and heard and a book of remembrance was written. That is all for our encouragement that we might be wholly in things. The book of remembrance is written; it is a record of appreciation of what was done in a scene of darkness and difficulty in relation to the interests of the Lord Jesus.

Well, we live in just such a difficult day but let us remember too that God is keeping a record of them that fear Him and think upon His name. Others, the prophet says, were thinking of their own interests; anything would do for God as far as they were concerned. It is clear from the prophet Malachi that what is due to God must ever be observed.

God is taking account of everything. Think of the work of God in its great variety throughout the world. God takes account of faithful saints wherever they may be and He would have them think upon His name and He is recording it. We may think little of it in the sense that it is not much that we are doing. That is one side but every bit of faithfulness in relation to the interests of the Lord Jesus, whether it is on a personal basis or in the household or collectively as it might be in Malachi, is taken account of in heaven. The day of reward, the day of display, the day of public appreciation of that on the part of our Saviour, is soon to come.

The One that the world has rejected will be publicly accorded glory and vindicated in the very scene of His rejection. But oh to be in the secret of that now by having a place in our hearts for Jesus, of having a treasure there that so motivates us now in the power of the Holy Spirit that we are set for, and committed to, the interests of Christ. Thank God that the Saviour is soon going to come for all His own. He will rapture us to glory, every living saint who belongs to Him; all those indeed who have fallen asleep through Christ will be raised first; that wonderful company of all who belong to Christ will for ever be with Him. But the testing time is now; the call is for faithfulness on my part now. The day of reward, the day of public vindication, the day of that crown that is laid up not only, as Paul could say (2 Timothy 4:8), for me, but for all those who love His appearing, that day is coming, that public crowning day. Thank God for it! Meanwhile may our hearts be encouraged and may each one of us be wholly in these precious things and may we all draw out the Saviour's blessing until He comes. For His name's sake.

Eric McPhail

Address at Sevenoaks 1998.

ANSWERED PRAYER

Psalm 116: 1-2
Habakkuk 1: 1-5,
3: 17-19
Luke 8: 22-25

I seek grace tonight to speak about God hearing our prayers. I have been led to speak of this because today there are many problems which are hard to solve and many prayers go up to God which seem to have no answer and we sometimes ask ourselves, 'Does God hear?'

In the psalm we find the words: "I love Jehovah, for he hath heard my voice". What more beautiful words could there be to comfort and console the believer. We know that the God in whom we trust has heard our voice, for did He not hear your voice when you cried out to Him when you were still in your sins? Yet now you may say, 'I have trodden the christian pathway for a number of years, and when I cry out to God it appears sometimes as if He does not hear'. The psalmist is not like that; he can say "I love Jehovah, for he hath heard my voice". Then we read, "For he hath inclined his ear unto me, and I will call upon him during all my days". That is the language of faith for the believer today. I will call upon Him during all my days! I see older ones in the company gathered here today who have practical experience of what the psalmist speaks of. They have known what it is to call upon the Lord all their days. Thank God for older ones who have experience with the Lord and who know the truth of what the psalmist says. They are men and women who can truly say from their hearts, I love Jehovah because He hath heard my call.

Now I want to just say a word as to the prophet Habakkuk. This is a very interesting prophecy. Unlike other prophecies, Habakkuk is not appealing to the people on behalf of God; he is speaking to God on behalf of the people. Another feature of the prophecy is that it starts with Habakkuk complaining and it finishes with Habakkuk rejoicing.

So what is it that happens between the first chapter and the third chapter of Habakkuk? Does God change? Does God concede to Habakkuk's pleadings? For Habakkuk surely is complaining. It says here, at the beginning, "Jehovah, how long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear?" Often we may feel that is the way things are, that we cry to God and He does not hear what we have to say. We may carry before Him the burdens that we feel are upon us, yet God does not come in.

Now, as I said at the outset in relation to Psalm 116, God most certainly does hear our cry. But what I want to bring before you from this scripture in Habakkuk

is that God is working in His own way and that way may not be the way that we expect.

Let me try to explain this. In verse 5 God says to them, “See ye among the nations, and behold, and wonder marvellously; for I work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be declared to you”. God is saying, ‘If I tell you what I am doing you will not believe it’. He tells them through the prophet that He is going to bring the Chaldeans, a wicked and vicious nation, and use them for the chastisement of His people. That was not the answer to prayer that Habakkuk wanted. Habakkuk pleads with God, ‘Are we not more righteous than the Chaldeans?’ But God knows what He is doing, and Habakkuk has to come to it that the very thing that he thought was the evidence that God was not working, the very fact that the Chaldeans were invading and it appeared that God was not hearing, was the very evidence that God was working.

I would like to bring this home right where we are. How many of us today find ourselves in difficult circumstances individually? How many persons find themselves in christian companies that are very small? We may sometimes look around at what is outward and ask if God is working? You perhaps know of another christian company which is growing. God is working there, and you wonder why He does not appear to be working where you are. Yet God is working, maybe not in the way that we would like and expect, but He is working in our hearts. The very thing that causes you to feel that God is not working is in reality the evidence that He is. He works things according to His own counsel in the way that He knows is best for you and me.

God wants Christ to be everything to us. When you have many others you can share things with it is often the company that means everything to us. But when you have not, who is it going to be? It has to be the Lord. It has to be Christ personally. And I believe the widespread fragmentation we see amongst believers today is an evidence that God is working in hearts.

It is also an evidence of the nearness of the coming of the Lord. When the Lord comes to take us to be forever with Himself, what will we have learnt of Him in our pathways here? Will we have treasures that we take to be eternally there with Him? Will we have that precious knowledge of Himself, that we have gathered up from life’s pathway, to take with us into an eternity with Christ? What will we have that we have learned of Him? The circumstances of the way may not be what I would choose but they are what God has chosen for me. They have been so ordered that I might gather up something precious of Christ a little more quickly than might have been possible otherwise.

What do we find in relation to Habakkuk? Does he change through chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 3? Does God change? I can assure you that if you look through

the book of Habakkuk you will find that God does not change. God cannot change. His love remains the same. It is in Habakkuk where the change occurs. He changes from complaining to rejoicing. When we come to the third chapter we find that there is a whole list of things that have not changed either. The fig tree has not blossomed, there is no fruit on the vines and the olive trees have failed. There is a whole list of things that Habakkuk might well have been praying about, on behalf of the people, but where there has been no change. "Yet", he says, "I will rejoice in Jehovah". That comes home as a lesson to my heart. Nothing changed except that Habakkuk changed from complaining to rejoicing. He had come to rest in the knowledge that God's ways were perfect and that God was working out His own plan in His own way according to His own timetable. And it is as though he says, 'I know that all those things that I wanted have not happened, yet I know God's love is toward me and He knows best and I am going to rejoice in it.'

The lessons of the way are in order that we might come to a better knowledge of the One who has done everything for us and who does all things well. We need to rest in the One who has thus worked and is still working in order that we might have a greater appreciation of His beloved Son.

There is just one thing that I want to draw attention to from the scripture in Luke. It is not the storm that wakens the Lord; it is the cries of His own. You may feel that the Lord does not intervene in the storms of life, that He is asleep, but He loves to respond to the cries of His own. This brings great comfort and consolation to my heart. I cannot cope with the storms of life, yet I know there is One who can and the moment I cry to Him I know He has heard.

Dear believers here today, I would that you might take comfort from the knowledge of this. The scriptures we have read may show you circumstances in which the Lord appears not to hear, but He hears because His love is towards us. He values us. He has His eye upon us. He knows exactly how we feel. He knows the circumstances of life; He knows the storms, the wind and the sea. Yet it is all to the end that we might turn to Him, just as we each turned to Him when we were still in our sins and found a Saviour who loved us and who forgave us our sins. Do we sometimes think that through life's pathway God's love must have changed? Well, it never does! The God that heard my cry when I called out to Him when I was still in my sins is the same God and it is the same heart that receives my cry today. I would love to comfort every believer here today that you might find your anchor in the love of God in a fresh and living way, not only in relation to your eternal destiny but in relation to the pathway through which the Lord in His grace is pleased to take each one of us.

I trust that these words may just be an encouragement to every heart. God hears and God loves you. May this come home as a reassurance to the heart of every one of us for our blessing, for His name's sake.

Keith Wickens

Extract from an address at Chippenham, 6th September 1997

MARRIAGE IN THE LORD

Lord, be Thou our constant guide throughout the days,
Help us to honour Thee in all our ways,
Blessing us ever, Lord, as man and wife,
And heirs together of the grace of life.

May grace and holiness e'er mark our home,
Which we would sanctify before Thy throne,
Make it for Thee, a Bethany, O Lord,
Witness and worship may it e'er afford.

Should trial come and sore oppress our way,
Then may we find in Thee our ready stay,
Trusting in Thee whate'er may intervene,
Proving Thy faithful love—more brightly seen.

And if at length the evening shadows fall,
Be this the sweetest memory we recall,
That from the outset of our nuptial day,
Thy love and grace have kept us all the way.

That way shall bring us to the "perfect day"
When over all, Thou shalt have fullest sway,
When, clad in garments spotless, by Thy side,
We'll share the lasting portion of Thy bride.

N Anderson

GRACE

Soft the voice of mercy sounded,
Sweet as music to the ear
Grace abounds where sin abounded,
This the word which soothed our fear;
Grace, the sweetest sound we know,
Grace to sinners here below.

Grace we sing, God's grace through Jesus;
Grace, the spring of peace to man;
Grace, that from each sorrow frees us;
Grace, too high for thought to scan;
Grace, the theme of God's own love;
Grace, the theme all themes above.

T Kelly

HE MAKETH NO MISTAKE

My Father's way may twist and turn,
My heart may throb and ache,
But in my soul I'm glad to know,
He maketh no mistake.

My cherished plans may go astray,
My hopes may fade away
But still I'll trust the Lord to lead
For He doth know the way.

Though night be dark and it may seem
That day will never break;
I'll pin my faith, my all in Him,
He maketh no mistake.

There's so much now I cannot see,
My eyesight's far too dim;
But, come what may, I'll simply trust
And leave it all to Him.

For by and by the mist will lift
And plain it all He'll make.
Through all the way, though dark to me,
He made not one mistake.

A M Overton

DIRECTION FROM THE LORD

Chumpe, Peru

Dear Brethren in Christ,

Four years ago in the district of Ricran, I organised a small Gospel Library, and by this means we received many spiritual blessings as the Word was made known. Because of my work I came to this town, but on my arrival did not let anyone know I was a believer. I was afraid to testify. One day I felt led to open my Bible and my eye fell upon this verse: "Then the Lord spake to Paul in the night, by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace" (Acts 18:9). I prayed to the Lord, asking Him to help me to do His will. Next day I took some tracts and began to distribute them to my workmates, and to testify for the Lord. After I had finished one came up to me and said, 'Thank God. I am your brother in Christ'. Then another came also, so that we were three, and since then we have been having meetings, and up to now we continue as the chorus says: 'I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back'.

At the same time we have not been without trials. I lost my wife and was left with six small children. I had to fight with the enemy who, with his false ideas, sought to separate me from the Lord. I continued meditating on the blessed words of the Bible and found solid assurance in these words from the epistle to the Romans:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? For thy sake we are put to death all the day long; we have been reckoned as sheep for slaughter. But in all these things we more than conquer through him that has loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39)

Dear brethren, we would be very grateful if you would send us some books to study, and also tracts to distribute, and thus gain others for the Lord. There are now about a dozen of us.

Hilardio V. Caro Meza (From the Spanish)
Reprinted from 'Missionary Gleanings'.

CONFIDENCE

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me”

(Psalm 23:4).

Our Shepherd leads in the paths of righteousness. But what may that involve? This we may learn from His own path, for it is the pattern of ours.

His path and testimony were ordered according to the will of Him that sent Him but it received no favour from the world. How could the One who ever did God’s will be valued in a world which had so far departed from God? From our Lord’s first step, therefore, in testimony, suffering is involved and the broad dark shadow of rejection and death was cast over His path. The farther He advanced, and the more resplendently shone in Him the grace of which He was the witness, the deeper became the shadow until it closed in the densest darkness of the cross. Yet in that path of rejection and suffering He walked, ever finding His consolation in His Father’s affections.

Peter, in his first epistle, tells of the paths of righteousness and the government of God with respect to those paths but he adds that we are called to suffering even in well-doing. “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

Let us consider this. We naturally expect that if we do God’s will and walk in righteousness, He will bestow upon us outward signs of His favour in earthly prosperity and human recognition. But such was not the path of our Shepherd nor is it that in which He leads. Righteousness involved deepest suffering for Him and may do so even for us. We are accustomed to think of the martyrs of old as professing Christ’s name under the shadow of the rack and the stake and we may suppose that for us there is no such shadow, seeing that the world has now become so largely christianized. Yet it is of a world having a form of godliness, but denying its power, that the apostle writes in 2 Timothy 3, and he says, “Yea, and all that will (or desire to) live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”. It may not actually involve imprisonment or death but there may be loss as to temporal things, in business, or situations, and there is in the deepest way the suffering of shame for His name.

What, then, is our consolation? Faith still exclaims, “I will fear no evil”. Beautiful expression of confidence! Let the shadows be never so dark I will not fear. What is the secret of such confidence? Is it some resource in one’s self or some compensating features in the conduct of those around us? No, it is not anything

of the kind but simply this: “For Thou art with me”. His presence is the secret of confidence.

There is a beautiful change in the psalm here. Up to this point the psalmist has dwelt upon what his Shepherd is to him but here it is, as he thinks upon the dark shadow of death, that he turns and addresses the Lord Himself, as One blessedly near: “Thou art with me”. It is no vain boast. He knows the presence of the One of whom he speaks and finds in it such unailing strength that the shadow may now deepen but it will not disturb his soul. Nothing less than this should be ours. He first sets our souls in all the rich pasturage of intimacy with Him where there is no disturbing element, giving us there divine satisfaction. Then He takes His place beside us here amid all the elements of confusion and distress existing in this world, to comfort and sustain by His presence even under death’s darkest shadow. Have we the consciousness of this, and is it enough for us?

His disciples in the days of His flesh had His presence with them when the storm was wildly raging. Yet so little did they know Him in faith that they rudely awoke Him and demanded His intervention with a reproachful, “Carest thou not?” The blessed Master arose and stilled the waves and commanded the wind to cease. Then He said, “How is it that ye have no faith?” How like to ourselves is this! We long for the “Peace, be still!” for we know so little of the calmness and joy of His presence in the storm.

In Paul’s history we have two special occasions recorded of the Lord’s presence with Him. The first was in the castle in Jerusalem. He had narrowly escaped being torn to pieces by the infuriated mob of his countrymen. He had nothing more to expect from them and the Roman power than that which had befallen his Master. As he thought upon this, and all the steps in his history up to this point, we may imagine that the shadow of death pressed heavily upon his spirit. In that moment the Lord stood by him, and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul” (Acts 23:11). Surely he might have exclaimed, “I will fear no evil; for thou art with me”.

Again, when he first stood before Nero, all forsook him. Those upon whom he might most have counted failed him, and he stood alone. He was in the valley with its deepest shadow about him. “Notwithstanding,” he says, “the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me” (2 Timothy 4:17). What a never-to-be-forgotten moment! The very darkness and sorrow throwing into relief the joy and sweet consolation of His presence!

“Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” In His hand lies all that is needed for our guidance and safety. Power is not in our hand; were it so we should know not how to use it. It is wholly in His, and while we are kept in the peaceful sense

of His presence with us, we are comforted in knowing that all that is needed for our sure and safe passage through the valley is in His hand.

May this holy confidence be ours! We are passing on to the land where no shadow is known, where death cannot come. Now, the narrow valley is ours, with its shadows and darkness, its sorrows and fears. May we not give way to those fears, nor impatiently demand His intervention as to our sorrows, but in the midst of them be kept in all the peace of His own presence with us, and in all the comfort that flows from knowing that power is in His hand!

J Revell

This continues the series of meditations on Psalm 23. In the next issue DV 'Triumph'.

THE SIGN OF JONAS

“Then answered him some of the Pharisees, saying, Teacher, we desire to see a sign from thee. But he, answering, said to them, A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it save the sign of Jonas the prophet. For even as Jonas was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights, thus shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights.” (Matthew 12:38-40)

“And the Pharisees and Sadducees, coming to him, asked him, tempting him, to show them a sign out of heaven. But he answering said to them...A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it save the sign of Jonas. And he left them and went away.”

(Matthew 16:1-4)

“But as the crowds thronged together, he began to say, This generation is a wicked generation: it seeks a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it but the sign of Jonas. For as Jonas was a sign to the Ninevites, thus also shall the Son of man be to this generation.”

(Luke 11:29-30)

“Men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, more than Jonas is here.

(Luke 11:32)

Introduction

In the course of His personal ministry, our Lord was pleased to make repeated comments on the history of Jonah. In these comments Jonah is presented in a three-fold way: as a type, a sign and a parallel. These three views of the same

topic are apt to be indiscriminately massed up in one. The distinct ideas suggested by each are then lost sight of.

The Type

The type is found in Matthew where the Lord invites a comparison between the marvellous dealings of God with the prophet, and His own burial and resurrection. The points of note are:

In both cases there is a death and a resurrection. Jonah says: “Out of the belly of Sheol cried I...” and “The bars of the earth closed upon me for ever: But thou hast brought up my life from the pit...” (Jonah 2:2&6). Of the Lord it says prophetically: “...thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol...Thou wilt make known to me the path of life” (Psalm 16:10 & 11).

In both cases, the death and burial are judicial processes. They are not in the ordinary course of nature. Each of them is a special judicial procedure, carried out by God, acting as judge, guarding the demands of justice, seeing to their execution and fulfilment.

The experience of Jonah constituted the gate by which the word of Jehovah passed forth from the Jewish to the Gentile world. And in like manner in the antitype. The death and resurrection of Christ was the breaking down of the middle wall of partition.

Jonah’s experience was his preparation for new loyalty and obedience. Christ’s risen life is the source in like manner, of newness of life and service.

The Sign

A sign is an evidence. Thus Paul says, “Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not”.

There are two frames of mind in which a sign may be demanded. You may ask for a sign as a help to faith, as Gideon did. Or you may ask for a sign as a pretext for unbelief. The Pharisees and Sadducees asked for a sign in this second spirit. That they did not wish to believe on Him, but to plead that they were excusable in not believing, is evident. They had seen signs enough already for Nicodemus to say: “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do those miracles that thou doest, except God were with him”.

Now, what kind of sign was Jonah to the Ninevites? Surely it was that he came with a message from God, a message that was to startle the Ninevites and humble them, bringing even the king from his throne. Secondly the sign is in the result—

that no soul in repenting Nineveh perished. As the Lord put it in a different place: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out”.

The Parallel

Luke makes the contrast between Jonah and Christ: “and behold, more than Jonas is here”. Let us consider the contrast.

Jesus is greater than Jonah in the greatness of His Person.

Christ is greater than Jonah in the discharge of His commission. Jonah was angry when God spared Nineveh. What acts of the Father ever displeased the Lord Jesus?

Jonah could only call to repentance but Christ “has God exalted by His right hand as leader and saviour, to give repentance to Israel” (Acts 5:31).

Jonah could speak with feeling about God’s judgment as having come under it but when Jesus counsels you to repent and flee from the wrath to come, the exhortation comes from One who, if we may reverently use the saying, knows what He is speaking of. He knows that wrath. Study the Psalms that open up to us the exercises of our Saviour’s agonised soul as suffering for sins not His own.

Hugh Martin (1822-1885)

THE CHURCH IN FOUR ASPECTS

Introduction to the series

Have you ever felt unsure about some part of the truth or thought that too much stress was laid on a particular aspect? That is exactly how I felt for years about the church as the bride of Christ. Then I discovered a series of articles by F E Raven on the church as the Body, the Temple, the House and the Holy City. To me it was a revelation.

Those four articles have been abridged to make them a suitable length for “Living Water” and it is intended that they will be published in successive issues of this magazine. Despite the editing, they can be heavy going. One christian called them ‘quite daunting to read’ and went on to describe them as ‘closely reasoned from a remarkable range of scriptures’.

Some readers may be put off by this, so here are a few pointers which may help. First, the article in this issue is in two parts: 'What the body is to Christ', then 'What the body is as the vessel of the Holy Spirit'.

The first part is occupied largely with a description of union, not in relation to marriage, as it is so often spoken of, but the organic union that exists between the body and the Head. F. E. Raven sees the truth of union leading on to the wonderful fact that the power of God that operated in raising Christ from the dead and giving Him His place as Head applies also to believers as united to Christ.

The second section deals with the greatness of the church as a vessel for the display and glory of Christ now. Whatever God has for man comes out by the Spirit in the church because it is Christ's body. He goes on to speak of some of the practical effects of the truth of the body.

But I must not go on—my enthusiasm could run away with me! You will no doubt find something by the Spirit for yourself from the article. May it be as much help to you as it was to me.

Ed.

ASPECT—1. THE BODY

Ephesians 1: 15-23

2: 1-7

1 Corinthians 12: 13, 27-31

I wish to dwell a little, on this and on succeeding occasions, as the Lord may enable me, on the truth of the church looked at in its different aspects, for it is very evident that the church is presented to us in Scripture in various ways.

Tonight I take up the truth of the body, first as it is seen in Ephesians, and then as it is viewed in Corinthians. The distinction is this: in Ephesians we get the truth of the body on the heavenly side, in what it is to Christ; in Corinthians we get it more on the earthward side (I do not know how better to put it), in its present aspect as the vessel of the Spirit here upon earth.

What the body is to Christ

I desire now to suggest two or three thoughts in connection with the body as it is presented to us in Ephesians.

The beginning of it is the Head and the first thought introduced is the power which has set the Head in His place. That is, the power that “wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places”, and “gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all”. It is the power of God which has been effective in Christ, to set Him in the place of Head over all. There could not be any church until Christ was set in this place of Head; you could not talk about the body until the Head was there.

God’s power has come out in two special things: first in raising Christ from the dead, and secondly, in setting Him at His own right hand as Man in the heavenly places, far above all principality and every name and He has given Him to be “Head over all things to the church”. It was in the eternal purpose of God that Christ was to be Head to the body but now God has set Him in His place as such and every christian is united to Christ as having the Spirit; hence the apostle can say to the Corinthians: “He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit”.

Before I pass on to speak of the body, I want to give an idea of what union means. Now to guard against misapprehension, I feel it is needful to say this—that when I speak of union, I do not mean union in the sense of marriage. Marriage has sometimes been spoken of as the declaration of union but I do not get that now. The church is espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ and has the bride place in that way, but when I speak of union, I mean organic union as of the members of a body to the Head.

It is very evident that the Head was there before there was ever a body at all. Christ was set at God’s right hand in the heavenly places before the Holy Spirit was given and when the Holy Spirit was given, then union was effected; it took place on the day of Pentecost. I do not think that the 120 in the upper room on the day of Pentecost understood union but they were united to Christ for through the receipt of the Holy Spirit they were united to the Head in heaven.

The revelation of the truth of it had yet to come out yet the body was formed. It is most important to hold this fast because if union is made dependant on the intelligence or understanding of union, it would be turning things upside down. It is a very important principle in divine things, that you understand the words by the thing and, if you have not got the thing, you cannot understand the words. Unless a man is born again, he cannot understand what being born again means. It is so with a great many other things. And unless a man is united to Christ by the Holy Spirit, it is totally impossible for him to understand what union means.

The first great truth that comes out here as to the church is that it is the fulness of Christ; that is the place which the church has, “his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all”. What I understand by it is this, that the church is proportioned morally to the One that fills all in all. I do not think that any vessel will adequately display Christ save the church. And when it comes out, no one will be able to say that the body is disproportioned to the Head; it will be the work of God. Christ will fill the universe with good and with blessing, the fruits of redemption. He is the tree of life and every family will live by Him but every family will not be His fulness; the church is His fulness, the vessel in which He is adequately displayed.

I do not think that anything short of the body could display the Head, or that Christ could be displayed in one believer. Christ may be displayed in every believer in measure, but for an adequate display of Christ you must have the whole body. The body is His completeness. The thought of the body here is not as in 1 Corinthians 12: there it speaks of the body at any given moment upon earth but here it is the body in the very fullest sense; it tells you what the church is, in its proper place, the completeness of Him that fills all in all.

I pass on to the next point, to see how the truth of the body has been effectuated in believers. It says, “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Chapter 2:5). Christ is not here spoken of as quickened, but as raised and seated at God’s right hand in heavenly places. And we get in regard to believers, “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”; that is, the power which has been applied to Christ has operated in us, and what God has effected in Christ is true for those that believe. Therefore you have to take the statement in two parts; first, as to what has been effected in us—that we are quickened together with Christ, and then that what has been effected in Christ is also true for believers.

Now I desire to show you where the truth of union lies. I tried to make plain at the beginning that every christian is united to Christ, because every christian has received the gift of the Spirit. But where the truth and secret of union lies is in the fact of a moral formation in the christian, which has been derived from Christ; that is, that having been quickened together with Christ, we have received a being which puts us in association with Christ. It is like Eve being taken out of Adam; she got, in a sense, her being from Adam. So, too, the church gets its

being from Christ. The church does not add anything to Christ, because it is derived from Christ.

The apostle says, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”. They had put off the old man, and put on the new, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth; they were now partakers of the divine nature. The power of the Spirit had become not only effective towards them, not only were there fleshy tables of the heart, and a real writing of Christ, as in the Corinthians, but there was the actual formation of a moral being, in virtue of which they now lived in association with Christ. Consequently what had been effected in Christ held good for them. And that is where the truth of union lies.

What a wonderful thought it is that a believer not only has the Holy Spirit communicated to him, but that the power of the Holy Spirit in him has made him a partaker of the divine nature. Union could only be on that ground. How could you be joined to Christ save as quickened together with Him? I admit that the same power which quickens you together with Him unites you to Him but I say the enjoyment or understanding of union with Christ could not possibly be if you were not conscious that you were of a new order by the power of the Holy Spirit. Union is not in the flesh; we are not united to Christ as men in the flesh; “He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit”, and the truth of union clearly lies in the Spirit.

If the fact of being quickened together with Christ is once apprehended, I can soon take the other points:- that the power of God that has been put in operation with regard to Christ applies to me as being part of Himself and united to Him: Jew and Gentile have been raised up together, and made to “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”. We never could have been united to Christ simply as Jew and Gentile. We are united in connection with a totally new spiritual being from Christ, who is at God’s right hand. You can understand it from the figure of Eve. God took her out of the man, and built her into a woman. And so it says of the church, “We are members of his body”, and that is where the truth of union lies.

One more thought in connection with Ephesians and that is that God has effected all this for His own satisfaction. It says in verse 7, “That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus”. The fact is that the motive spring which led God to do it was love. God would have us in His own company, in His own place. God acted from

love. I could not possibly tell why God loved us in that way but that is what Scripture states. “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us”, would have us there, in His own abode in heavenly places and therefore it is really for His own satisfaction. If you accept the truth that God is absolutely good and blessed, then what He does for His own pleasure must be absolutely good and blessed too and He has done this for His own pleasure.

I hope you will bear in mind, by the grace of God, the thoughts I have tried to bring before you in regard to the church on what I may call the heavenly side; for the more you enter into it, the more you will understand God and the better you understand God, the more you will be able to apprehend the truth.

What the body is as the vessel of the Holy Spirit

If you turn now to 1 Corinthians 12, we shall view the body on the other side. The subject of the chapter is concerning “spiritual manifestations”, or spiritual gifts; I think that anyone reading the chapter would see that the prominent idea in it is not the body but the Spirit but the body is introduced as the vessel where the manifestations of the Spirit are set. In this way the church is the glory of Christ. The expression is used in 2 Corinthians, where the apostle, speaking of the brothers whom he was sending to the Corinthians, says that they were messengers of the churches, Christ’s glory.

When Christ was here personally, everything that God had for man came out in Him by the Spirit of God. Whatever Christ had to say to men, He said it by the Spirit, and whatever Christ did for man He did by the Spirit. Various scriptures prove this. He says, “If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons”; Jesus of Nazareth, anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power “who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him”; in the power of the Spirit He goes to Nazareth, and says, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor”. It was in the heart of God to relieve man from the consequences that sin had brought upon him and from the power of Satan but all that beneficence and good from God came to man through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now I venture to say that whatever God has for man comes out by the Spirit in the church as Christ’s body. In the early days of christianity, if gifts of healing came to men they were set in the church or if God had light for men down here it came out through the body. That extends even to the revelation of God, for every bit of light we get as to christianity, all the New Testament scriptures came out through members of the body; “God hath set some in the church, first

apostles, secondarily prophets”. All that God has to say to man and to bestow upon men in grace was set in the church. I think it is in that sense the apostle introduces the body here, as the vessel of all beneficence of God to man; all these various distributions of the Spirit were in the church; all that which really displayed the good of God coming out through Christ to men was set in the church, because the church is the body of Christ. Christ was no longer here personally, but the body of Christ was here.

Thus in 1 Corinthians 12 we get the earthly side of the church; it is not the church looked at as the fulness of Christ, and union is not taught in the chapter (though unity is taught there) but the church, as the body, is the vessel in which are set all the manifestations of the Spirit and it makes us all dependant upon one another. I wonder what people mean when sometimes they say, ‘I never learnt anything from man’. If they simply mean that they never learnt anything from man, as man, that may be the case but if they mean that they never learnt anything through the instrumentality or medium of man they must be very ignorant persons because Paul and John were members of the body, though they were apostles, and all the light that comes to us, the very scriptures themselves, come to us through the apostles, and the apostles were set in the church.

The practical application of it in the present day is this, that we should recognise the truth of the one body. “By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body”, “and have been made to drink into one Spirit”. That was not a kind of mystical idea; it was a reality down here which saints were to recognise; they were one body by the baptism of the Spirit, so that the apostle could say to the body of the saints at Corinth, “Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”. Christ could not have two bodies in Corinth, any more than Christ can have two bodies in London. There is Christ’s body in London, and it is a very great point to recognise that fact. Because, if once I recognise it, I say I have done completely with anything which takes up distinctive sectarian ground. I will not be identified with apostasy, like popery, nor with a state church, nor with the denominations (which take the ground of being distinctive in one way or another) for the simple reason that I recognise the fact, “Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”, and “By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body”, and the one body is the vessel here for the manifestations of the Spirit.

There is one point more, and it is that there must be room given for the Spirit. For instance, if you have an appointed minister, if you do not give liberty of ministry, you put restrictions upon the Spirit. You can never tell who may be a

vessel for the manifestation of the Spirit, for the Spirit sometimes uses very unlikely people because the Spirit is sovereign.

All this truth is as to the church on its earthward side, but it is vastly important for if you do not recognise it, you cannot understand anything about the assembly as convened. The instruction is given to the Corinthians for the regulation of the assembly as convened, and to avoid confusion. We come together as mutually dependant, for we are all one body, and every member of the body is dependant on every other member of the body, as well as dependant on the Head.

Suppose a man were to say, 'I am not going to concern myself about the body, or church principles. I am going to exercise the gift the Lord has given me'. My answer to him is this; God has set the gift in the church, and if you recognise that fact, you cannot ignore the church. Let a man be the most distinguished gift that ever was, he cannot ignore the church. An apostle could not, because God set apostles in the church. You have no option in the matter; you must, in the first instance, recognise the truth of the church and that every gift is set in the church and leave free room for the Spirit of God. And therefore, the most distinguished gift that a man could have was not to overshadow every other gift. There may be members that are less conspicuous and yet they are equally important. And it is not at all of God that the great gifts should overshadow everything else because we are all set in the body in dependence upon the Head and upon each other. That is the principle in its constitution. May God give us to understand it better.

F.E. Raven

London 1894 (Abridged)