

Living Water

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WAITING FOR THE LORD

2 Kings 6: 24-25, 32-7:2
 7: 1 & 2
Isaiah 40: 28-31
1 Thessalonians 1: 6-10

These scriptures all speak of waiting for the Lord. In the scripture in 2 Kings there are people waiting on the Lord in times of difficulty; in Isaiah we have waiting on the Lord in prayer and, finally, in Thessalonians waiting for His coming. In some instances waiting on the Lord involves restfulness and quietness of spirit while in others it involves activity.

Waiting on the Lord in times of difficulty

In the books of the Kings there are two great prophets, Elijah and Elisha. Elisha follows Elijah with a double portion of his spirit and you have a wonderful ministry of grace. Elisha heals the waters of Jericho (2 Kings 2:19-22), raises a woman's son from the dead (2 Kings 4:32-37), counteracts the poison which had got into the food pot by causing meal to be cast into the pot (2 Kings 4:38-41), and heals Naaman the Syrian of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-14). Whatever the need, help was brought in by Elisha. It was truly a ministry of divine grace.

There is an incident recorded for us in 2 Kings 6, a little before where we began to read, which tells us about a time when the king of Syria sent an army to Dothan to capture Elisha and they surrounded the city. Elisha's servant, when he sees the Syrian army, says, 'What shall we do?' and Elisha prays to the Lord and says, 'Open the man's eyes'. "And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings 6:17). It is a great thing to realise the resources that God has available even to deal with our personal circumstances and the circumstances that affect our gatherings.

Elisha knew the resources were there and he prayed that the man's eyes would be opened. There are many among us who are going through deep waters at the moment; let us see the resources that God has to bring in on our behalf; let our eyes be opened to them tonight.

Moses provides another example. Think of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt heading for the Red Sea. 600 chariots of the Egyptians were bearing down on them. What a situation! What does Moses say? "Fear not: stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah" (Exodus 14:13). Dear friends, God is able to do far better for us than we are able to do for ourselves. Not only in our initial need of our sins being met but as christians we need to realise that He has the resources to meet every situation.

Well, we read that the Syrians come up again and it is a time of dreadful famine. The city was besieged until an ass's head was worth 80 silver pieces. What a situation! Finally, a woman boils her own son! What difficult times they were and yet Elisha "sat in his house". There is a restfulness about him in this dreadful situation in the city of Samaria. There was no food available but Elisha is sitting in his house simply waiting on the Lord.

Elisha's position is in contrast to the king of Israel who says: "this evil is of Jehovah: why should I wait for Jehovah any longer?" Have you ever said something like that? Have you ever got to a situation where you think everything is hopeless and that God is not going to intervene? I am reminded of Saul. He was told by Samuel to wait at Gilgal "until I come to thee and inform thee what thou shalt do" (see 1 Samuel 10:8). Saul waited, then later he "forced himself and offered up the burnt offering" (see 1 Samuel 13:12-14). He went ahead in fleshly zeal but not in faith and the result was that his kingdom would not continue. Think of the disasters that have come into the testimony as a result of moving in fleshly zeal. Let us wait on the Lord to come into the situation because He has both the answer and the resources.

Elisha says, 'To-morrow there will be food in the gate'. It is the word of the Lord and the situation is going to be turned around completely. Was it any great matter for God to come in? How were the Syrians put to flight? We are told that the Lord "made the army of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, a noise of a great host" and they fled. The situation turned around completely. Let us be with God in every situation, whether it be our circumstances individually, or in our families, or situations in our christian companies. Let us take things to the Lord and wait on Him.

In 2 Kings 7:2 there was one who mocked at Elisha's words. He was a man who did not know God or the resources which He has. He says: "if Jehovah should make windows in the heavens, would this thing be?" What a thing to say! Has God got windows in heaven? Turn to Malachi and you find that God

makes a promise: "Bring the whole tithe into the treasure-house, that there may be food in my house, and 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). The windows of heaven are open tonight and blessing is streaming down. Why is that? Because Christ has been received up in glory. He has gone back there, His work complete. Redemption has been secured. God has a righteous basis to come out in blessing towards the sinner and blessing is streaming down tonight.

Elisha tells the mocker, "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof". Oh, dear friend, do not trifle with the word of God as it comes. This man was trampled in the gate in the rush to get out of the city.

Waiting on the Lord in prayer

The next scripture bears on the same thought but it is waiting on the Lord in prayer. That is a very important matter. Isaiah is reminding the people of the greatness of the God with whom they have to do. He says, "Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not nor tireth?" This is the One who is our God. I wonder if we really have the faith to bring every thing to Him in prayer.

When Jerusalem was under threat from the Assyrian army, as recorded in Isaiah 37, the king, Hezekiah, took the matter in prayer to God. Hezekiah had received a letter from the enemy, mocking God. When he read it he goes up into "the house of Jehovah" and spreads the letter before the Lord. That is the way to bring God in, to spread things before Him. God's answer comes almost immediately by the prophet. "Thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city". God brings about His deliverance through one angel who smote the camp of the Assyrians. Think of the resources that God has. One angel slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand men. So, where we read in chapter 40, we are told: "even the youths shall faint and shall tire, and the young men shall stumble and fall; but they that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength".

How thankful we are for the prayer meeting. We should come to it with real concern in our hearts about matters that affect the testimony of our Lord. God delights to hear our prayers and delights to answer them. Paul exhorted the Colossians to "persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians

4:2). There is to be a result. We are to be before God in regard of matters that are on our hearts and we are waiting upon Him to come in with the answer.

One of the great examples in regard of prayer in the Old Testament is Hannah. Think of her desires in regard of a man-child who would be for the service of the Lord. What affliction of spirit she passed through. But it says that she arose up and her countenance was not as before (1 Samuel 1:11, 18). She came out of the presence of the Lord and she had a sense that she had been heard. That is a wonderful thing, to have a sense that your prayer has been heard in heaven.

We need to take our burdens to the Lord and leave them there. It is no use taking them in and bringing them out again. That is a test to me. Think of the circumstances that we are faced with and in which we have proved the Lord's help—matters of business or family or health. Let us take our burdens into the Lord. He is able for them. He can do better for us than we can do for ourselves.

Writing to the Ephesians Paul says of God that He "is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think, according to the power which works in us" (Ephesians 3:20). It is a marvellous thing to know such a One. The God that neither slumbers nor sleeps is the One who would listen to our prayers. As we pray in faith we must believe that God is and is the rewarder of those who seek Him out.

The expression 'wait upon' in Isaiah 40:31 could be rendered 'look for' Jehovah. It means that, having prayed, you are looking for an answer, looking for the Lord to come in. We can go into His presence at any time. We can bring those matters to Him that are on our hearts and we can leave them there for He is able to deal with everything.

Waiting for the coming of the Lord

Finally, I read about the coming of the Lord. These believers in Thessalonica were waiting for the Lord's return. I am challenged as to whether I really feel the Lord's absence. How much is His absence bearing upon me? We were reminded last week of Mary: "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him" (John 20:13). Mary was inconsolable. I wonder how much the Lord's absence has a bearing upon my life.

The Thessalonians turned from idols to serve a living and true God. The idea here is of serving and waiting. There is to be activity. Am I concerned about

reaching others with the gospel? If the return of the Lord is a reality to me I will be, because the coming of the Lord is the end of the preaching of the glad tidings. Am I concerned for what is due to the Lord in the time of His absence? The Thessalonians not only turned from idols but “to serve a living and true God”. The Lord’s supper and the service of praise is a precious occasion and I would urge every one here to value it in a greater way.

It is precious because there is nothing that can focus our attention more on the love of the Lord than the Lord’s supper. Nothing makes us feel His absence more than the celebration of His supper. We will gather tomorrow morning, if the Lord will, to remember Him but we gather in the expectancy that He will manifest Himself to us. That is a precious thing, to know the Lord coming into the occasion, giving us a sense of His presence and a sense of His love. I would urge every one here to value the supper. It is not that it makes anything of us—far be the thought. Let us value the supper then as an occasion that would focus our attention on the glory of the Man who has gone up and the glory of the One who is coming for us. We “await his Son from the heavens”.

What bearing is this going to have on my life from tonight onwards? Is the coming of the Lord going to be a present thing to each of us? That is the way we will be held. Peter says, “The Lord does not delay his promise, as some account of delay, but is longsuffering towards you, not willing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9). I am challenged as I stand here. We used to go out and preach in the street in the town where I live but we were often thankful when it rained so that we could not go! What do I care about the salvation of those around me and those I work with? Let us be in activity in the time that is left to us. Let us fulfil what is due to God in the way of thanksgiving and worship and let us go out in service to those around. Let us be ready to give an account of the hope that is in us. What a hope we have—glory with Christ above! There is nothing like it.

Time is short. Let us be alive in the testimony. Let us be here waiting. Think of that company we are told of in the early part of Luke’s gospel. They were awaiting redemption. Think of a man like Simeon who could take the Lord in his arms and say, “mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (Luke 2:30). He could see that in that Child every thing was to be secured for God.

Will we be surprised when the Lord comes? Let us be as those who have got oil in their lamps and their lamps trimmed awaiting for that precious moment. The coming of the Lord comes into every chapter of both of the epistles to the

Thessalonians. May it be a present thing with us. Let us be held, not only in the doctrine of it but in the expectancy of it. Every day may we be found awaiting "his Son from the heavens". The book of the Revelation closes with the expression, "the spirit and the bride say, Come". Think of that moment when the church and the Spirit will be in unison in that way! May the answer of our hearts be "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus."

David McIntyre

Address at Aberdeen 21st November, 1998

IN CHRIST, WITH CHRIST AND LIKE CHRIST

I want to speak of the wonderful portion of every believer as "in Christ", "with Christ" and 'like Christ'.

In Christ

"So if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

What does it mean to be "in Christ"? It means to belong to Christ. Simply put it means a new beginning. "If any one be in Christ, there is a new creation."

We have a new beginning, in Christ. That was our departed brother's portion in life here. When he put his trust and faith in Jesus that was his status. He belonged to Jesus. What confidence this gives us!

I want to tell you something about this Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. What makes Him so important to the believer? It is because Jesus is the One who came to this world and died. He shed His blood to effect the great work of redemption and make it possible for guilty sinners such as you and I to have an abiding certainty for the future.

Jesus did what no other could do; He died and He rose again. Everything rests upon His resurrection. The apostle Paul says: "if Christ be not raised ... we are the most miserable of all men" (1 Corinthians 15:17, 19). Great heroes have outstanding achievements and conquests but no one ever conquered death but Christ.

What a wonderful Person Jesus is! Every true believer can with confidence say that they are "in Christ"; there is a new creation; they have a new beginning. There is no ambiguity, no grey areas; you are either an unbeliever or a believer. You belong to Christ or you do not.

With Christ

“But I am pressed by both, having the desire for departure and being with Christ, for it is very much better” (Philippians 1:23)

In this second scripture, Paul is writing and he was pressed with two thoughts. One was to remain to help Christians. The other was having desire for departure, to leave this life to go to be “with Christ”. That is the great outlook for the believer. It is a great outlook for those who have placed their faith, hope and trust in this One who has conquered death.

One of the most comforting things we can say to those who feel the loss of our brother is that he is “with Christ”. That is our brother’s present position. There is great comfort also in an occasion like this in the thought of resurrection. That is what the third scripture we read speaks of.

Like Christ

“and what we shall be has not yet been manifested; we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”

(1 John 3:2).

We read: “and what we shall be has not yet been manifested”. We do not know what we shall be. In Philippians we are told that the Lord Jesus Christ “shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory” (Philippians 3:21). That is what our bodies are, “bodies of humiliation”. We remember our brother very affectionately. He was weakened in his body—a stroke, difficulty walking, all these kind of things. But that body of humiliation will be changed; it will be conformed to Christ’s body of glory. That is ‘like Him’, like Christ. What a glorious prospect for the believer.

I trust that each one here may just take stock as to where we are in relation to Christ. We are today in the presence of death. Can you say with certainty that you will depart this life to be with Christ, and eventually to be like Him? May it be the portion of all for His name’s sake.

Alec Campbell

A word at a burial. Portknockie, 28th August, 1999.

GOD IS WILLING; ARE YOU?

God is now willing through the Saviour who died,
Willing to pardon and cleanse the defiled,
Willing to take you and make you His child;
God is willing; Are you?

God is now willing to give you His peace,
Willing from bondage of sin to release,
Willing the conflict within you should cease;
God is willing; are you?

God is now willing to answer your prayer,
Perfectly willing your burden to bear,
Ready and waiting to take all your care;
God is willing; are you?

God is now willing within you to dwell,
Willing with blessing your spirit to fill;
Yield to His pleading and give up your will;
God is willing; are you?

El Nathan

THE WORK OF CHRIST

Down from the splendour of His everlasting throne
Came the Lord of Glory, for our sins to atone,
Son of God and Lord of all, He the Surety stood,
Paid the sinner's ransom in His precious blood.

Over death triumphant He's risen from the grave,
Back to heaven ascended, Jesus lives to save.
Nothing else remaineth but salvation to receive,
When with true repentance, you on Him believe.

Come today to Jesus, do not stay away.
Come and take salvation, come while you may,
Heavenly voices call you, the Saviour waits to bless,
Come to Him believing, and His name confess.

J. Waller

THE SECRET OF HIS PRESENCE

In the secret of His presence how my soul delights to hide!
Oh how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesus' side!
Earthly cares can never vex me, neither trials lay me low;
For when Satan comes to tempt me, to the secret place I go.

When my soul is faint and thirsty, 'neath the shadow of
His wing
There is cool and pleasant shelter, and a fresh and crystal spring;
And my Saviour rests beside me, as we hold communion sweet;
If I tried, I could not utter what He says when thus we meet.

Only this I know: I tell Him all my doubts and grief and fears;
Oh how patiently He listens, and my drooping soul He cheers;
Do you think He ne'er reproves me? What a false Friend He
would be,
If He never, never told me of the sins which He must see!

Would you like to know the sweetness of the secret of the Lord?
Go and hide beneath His shadow; this shall then be your reward;
And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy meeting place,
You will bear the shining image of the Master in your face.

Ellen Goreh

HAVE FAITH IN GOD

Have faith in God! Dark though the morn may be,
He yet will cause His face to shine on thee.
Have faith in God! If sorrows come today
He knows of it, and perfect is His way.

• Have faith in God! No load's too great for prayer,
Cast all your care on Him, and leave it there.
Have faith in God! Doth trouble's hour draw near?
Sure as His promise will thy help appear.

Have faith in God! Should future course be dim
Take the next step and leave the rest to Him.
Have faith in God! If He lay thee aside,
He hath His reasons: in His love abide.

Trust then in God till pilgrim days are o'er,
And thou hast need to walk by faith no more.

Anon.

MY TESTIMONY

I was born in Stoke on Trent and was one of a family of six. I had two brothers and three sisters. I do not have happy memories of my childhood. We certainly did not have a christian upbringing. When I was fifteen, I remember Billy Graham coming to our town. I made some kind of response to the gospel; I sang in his choir at the Victoria Hall, Hanley; I read the Bible and tried to be good. My family made fun of me, so it did not last long.

From as far back as I can remember I have always believed in God and in Jesus, and God knows your heart. In my teens I loved worldly things: dancing, smoking, drinking and running around with boys. At seventeen I joined the Womans Royal Army Corps and had a really good time. Satan can really make your journey to hell fun.

When I was twenty I got married to a really good man. We had a beautiful daughter. After salvation, she is the best thing that ever happened to me. I felt that I had everything but I was not satisfied. I wanted to be out

enjoying night life. I had a perfect husband but he was as much of an introvert as I was extrovert. After seventeen years my marriage ended in divorce, due entirely to me.

My second husband was completely opposite from my first. He loved the night life, drinking as I did, but when he was in drink he could be quite nasty which made for a stormy marriage. You could say that I reaped what I sowed during the time I was married to my second husband.

We were quite prosperous; we had pubs in London, a home in Nottingham and a home in Spain. We retired early and spent most of the time in Spain. My husband was mostly on the golf course, so for something to do I bought and sold apartments to make more money. But I was still not happy. On the outside I looked happy but there was a big void in my life.

In 1987 we were in Blackpool for a weekend and looking through the property paper one advertisement seemed to be jumping out of the pages at me; it was a small guest house for sale. We went to see it and as soon as I walked in I knew in my heart that I would have it. The lady told me that she advertised in christian papers, not because she was a christian but because this meant that she got nice people and they made their own beds. This made me laugh and I said that I was a christian, because I was thinking that I believed in Jesus.

My first guest was a lady called Kath Richardson, now one of my dearest friends in the Lord. At night I would sit and tell her my problems and she would tell me about the Lord. She went home to Durham and got all her christian friends to pray for me.

Some months later I met a lady in a christian book shop. She asked me if I was a christian. Again I said 'Yes'. She said 'Praise the Lord'. I thought that she sounded just like my sister Violet who was a believer and who I thought was a religious nut, as did the rest of the family. She was always telling me about Jesus and how the Lord provided. I could only see how poor she was, yet how rich I was, and I was the sinner! It just did not make sense. Little did I realise that she was the millionaire and I was the poor one spiritually.

The young lady that I met in the christian book shop asked me to go to church with her. It was some time before I would agree and six months after I met her, in September 1987, I went with her. My husband would not come but said that he would collect us later and dropped us off outside. I can never explain in writing what happened to me when I got to that church. I had not

got my foot inside the door when the power of God came upon me and my inside began to break up. I sobbed from my stomach. There were no tears down my face, just inside. I do not know what the preaching was about but at the end when the preacher asked if there was anyone who wanted Jesus to come into their life I could not say the prayer quick enough. Then all the tears from inside came. I felt that I was clean. Hallelujah!

My husband met a different woman to the one that he had left two hours before. I did not tell him what I had done; I was afraid that he would make fun and I wanted nothing to spoil it. I went home and when my husband had gone out for a drink, I rang my sister who was delighted. It was two weeks before my husband knew. We were having one of our usual rows but no swearing took place from me. He said, 'You have changed'. I said, 'Yes, I have given my heart to Jesus'. He did not laugh and never did and I am grateful to him for that. I tried to tell him about what I had, but he did not want to know. I could not give it to him; it is a free gift from God. We do not choose Jesus, He chooses us. I kept telling him how wonderful I felt and the peace I felt and how he could have that peace which I knew he needed.

Before I trusted in Jesus I drank, and smoked and swore. I gave none of these things up—they fell away in a second. I had tried to change on my own many times, but Jesus did it in His grace in a second.

If anyone reading my testimony does not know Jesus I would like to say: 'Today is the day of salvation'. Jesus says this, not me. Everyone who spends a day without Jesus has had a wasted day.

Irene Cook

I SAW A UFO!

It was in January 1994 that I became obsessed with the UFO phenomena after seeing the one that was reported in the Chester Chronicle at that time. I came across various speakers who were relating such 'signs of the times' as they called them to the second coming of Christ, and became so interested in the subject that I wanted to know the truth.

In my confused state I joined a false cult, thinking that I needed religion to get me to heaven. Later I was deceived into following the regulations of another

sect, but eventually as I continued seeking for the truth I heard a preacher from New Zealand who was able to put it into perspective in a very down to earth way. I realised that the truth was to be found in the Bible and that Jesus Himself is the Truth, the Son of God.

The Holy Spirit convicted me of all my sin which included drug abuse, pornography, fornication, cigarette addiction and much more. As I confessed my sinful ways to God and asked for His forgiveness He was gracious to me and forgave and cleansed me and came into my life to help me to live for Him.

The mercy of God extends to everyone no matter what they have done but to come into the good of it we must believe and repent. This means to give up our sin and turn to the Lord Jesus and let Him take care of our lives. It was a meeting in Manchester in October 1995 that I was saved, saved from going to hell forever, because I accepted that the punishment of all my many sins had been taken 2000 years ago when Jesus died for me on the cross.

I have been baptised and now attend a Bible believing church. The Lord has given me a work to do warning as many people as possible of the significance of the days in which we live and the need to get right with God while there is still time.

Andy Jones

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN BISAYA-INONHAN

For many years Eldon Talamisan with his wife Tessie has been working on a translation of the New Testament into Bisaya-Inonhan. This is the language used in the Tablas Islands, part of the Philippines, where Eldon was brought up. Quite recently the long labour of translation and checking came to fruition and the New Testament in this relatively little-known language has just been published.

Eldon intends personally to distribute copies of the New Testament and use the opportunity for speaking to many about the Lord. There is apparently a real thirst for the gospel in some parts of Tablas mixed in with a great deal of nominal christianity. In a sense the hardest part of the work lies ahead, and Eldon and Tessie would be glad of the prayers of believers that the Lord may bless this work. Ed.

THE PATH AND THE HOME

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever” (Psalm 23:6)

In the first verse of this psalm the theme is given, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want”. The psalmist then dwells on the detail, showing where he finds satisfaction and rest, coming then to the paths of righteousness lying in this world, thinking of what they may involve—death’s dark shadow and the meeting of mightiest foes. Yet he looks upon all with a heart undisturbed, for all he needs is in his Shepherd’s hands and is to be found in His company, so that in all things he is more than conqueror through Him that loves him.

In this closing verse he sums all up, giving expression to his confidence respecting his path, and stating the desire of his heart respecting his home. The former he introduces with “Surely”. No doubt remains; no shadow is upon his spirit. He has in his meditation gone through all that may arise and he so knows the One who has him in hand that in face of everything he can express his unbounded confidence. It reminds us of how Paul said that he was persuaded that no power can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8).

It is not that faith is insensible to the sorrows and trials of a wilderness path nor is it that the powers arrayed against us are underrated but the soul is in the sweet persuasion that everything that can arise will only prove an occasion for the manifestation of what God is in His own unalterable goodness and in the tender mercy which thinks upon us in all our need. It makes a great difference whether we are occupied with the trials and enemies or occupied with what God is. If the former, we shall be fretted and in dismay; if the latter, we are kept in perfect peace. No power can arise which is too great for Him and we shall have the opportunity of witnessing the manifestation of His own goodness and power.

“Goodness and mercy shall follow me.” In sovereign goodness God is above all the power of evil and unaffected by it. In tender mercy He thinks upon my need in the midst of evil and the power of death. So Paul spoke of the recovery of Epaphroditus, whose death he had feared. “But God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow” (Philippians 2:27). How touching is this! The blessed God weighing the sorrows

of His poor and greatly tried servant and taking care that there shall not be one too many!

Next the Psalmist thinks of, "All the days of my life". Whatever may fill them up, however varied or monotonous they may be, in all the days, God's goodness and mercy follow us. We are not called to follow mercies. Some are ever seeking pleasant things and are therefore continually disappointed. We are to follow the Lord, as He leads, and wherever He leads, but as we do so we shall find as our constant companions goodness and mercy.

Yet, however closely the tokens of all that God is to His beloved people may attend us, our home is not here. Even the psalmist would distinguish between that which belongs to his path and the home of his spirit; therefore he added:—"and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever". In his path he is sustained, for goodness and mercy follow him, but his loved home is in the presence of the Lord. David had proved the sweetness of it when he went in and sat before the Lord (2 Samuel 7) that in abstraction from all that surrounded he might commune with Him. So again he said, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple" (Psalm 27:4).

There is great danger, even where the world has been refused, of resting in present mercies. The traveller may thankfully take whatever comforts and helps he may get in his journey but he takes them to speed him on to the home for which he longs. So we sometimes sing:-

But, oh, the more we learn of Thee,
And Thy rich mercy prove,
The more we long Thy face to see,
And fully prove Thy love.

Our hope is laid up in heaven. Whatever be the mercies of the way we would not rest here but push on to where our precious Saviour is in life and glory. If to see the manifestation of His goodness be so sweet on earth, what will it be to be in His presence, His love our own unalloyed portion for ever! Such is our hope.

But it is not only in hope that we have this portion. The joys of the home to which we go are now made known for present enjoyment in faith and the Spirit who dwells in us delights to make them good in our souls. There are the

green pastures in which even now we are made to lie down and from whence we come forth invigorated to tread the path. But when there remains no more of the path to be trodden, when the wear and tear of life is over, when the shadow of death has been for ever cleared away by the bright shining of His presence, when the last foe shall have been destroyed, then without interruption we shall fully know the joy which has sustained and invigorated us here.

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want!” Ever blessed be His name!

J Revell

This concludes the series of meditations on Psalm 23.

“LET US OCCUPY OURSELVES IN SERVICE”

A very great deal of trouble and sorrow would be avoided if believers engaged themselves more in christian activities. If there were more service there would be less room for things which lead to envyings, jealousies, evil speakings and personal differences and misunderstandings

Practical deliverance from what is of the flesh is found as we move in activities which are of the Spirit.

Much that is sorrowful amongst the people of God arises from slothfulness. There is a lack of definite purpose to serve the Lord and people get engaged with all kinds of selfish pursuits.

The house of Stephanas is a good example for us all; they had appointed themselves to the saints for service (1 Corinthians 16:15). The Lord greatly values a definite committal of this kind. If there were more of it, how greatly we should benefit and time would be redeemed instead of wasted!

C. A. Coates.

HELP FOR ANXIOUS SOULS 2

Have I come to Jesus in the right way?

There is only one right way and that is with a sense in your soul that you have a need which only He can meet. Do not get occupied with the act of coming to Him.

Look at that poor weak woman in the gospels, elbowing her way through the crowd until she was able to stoop down and touch the hem of His garment. What occupied her heart? Not the actual coming to Jesus but the Person she is set upon reaching. All other help had failed and if another and more able physician had met her on the road she had nothing with which to pay his fee. "She had spent all her living".

But she had heard of Jesus and she believed that He was able to heal the most hopeless as He was willing to heal the most helpless. Filled with the thought that to reach Him would be healing and health, and that missing Him would leave her hopelessly incurable for the remainder of her days, she pressed forward till that timid touch brought all that her heart could wish for.

What a circuitous path it must have been in that pressing crowd! No other could have come exactly the same way. But, thank God, since then tens of thousands have come to the same Person, saying:-

‘Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee’

‘Without Thee I perish for ever. To Thee ‘O Lamb of God, I come’.

What about my sins after I was converted?

Remember that, apart from the eternal judgment of the lost, God has only one way of dealing with sin according to His own righteousness and that is by the sacrifice and death of Jesus. Take a sinning saint—say David in the Old Testament—and one like yourself, in the present dispensation. The cross of Christ met every sin for both or else eternal damnation must be your portion. But in the two cases there is one marked difference. When Christ hung upon the cross as the sin-bearer, He bore none of David’s sins but his past sins while He bore none of yours but your future sins. When that blessed One was

actually, bearing "our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24), David's sins were all in the past and yours were all in the future. As the hymn puts it:-

'God, who knew them, laid them on Him,
And believing, thou art free.'

Or, better still, as the Scripture puts it: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). David's sins and yours and mine—the sins of every saved soul in the world's history—all found a meeting place there. What an attraction through eternity will that cross be to every redeemed one, in whatever dispensation his life may have been lived.

It was love unsearchable that brought Him there and until sin's full judgment was endured and exhausted, until that mightiest of victories was won, it was love unquenchable that kept Him there. Blessed Saviour!

What therefore makes our sins after conversion so iniquitous is the dishonour we bring to such a Name, the grief we bring to such a heart as His.

But He, who thought of and met our case as ruined sinners, has not forgotten to provide for us as ungrateful saints. He who took our place upon the cross and died for us has taken up our cause upon the throne and lives for us. "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10). That is, we get the divine guarantee, in the words "much more", of our preservation to the end.

Sin ought not to come in and there is no shadow of excuse for us when it does. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not" (1 John 2:1). But there is a gracious provision, notwithstanding, for the very same verse says, "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous". It does not say, 'If any man repent, we have an Advocate'. No! Repentance and self-judgment are the results of the Advocate's service for us. He does not plead because we are made sorry; we are made sorry because He pleads. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" was His gracious word to Peter. He knew that Peter's conduct would fail but He did not wait until Peter "wept bitterly" before He prayed for him. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

He had once before proved to that then self-confident Peter that He was as well able to support a disciple beginning to sink as He was able to attract a

disciple beginning to walk; that if Peter took his eye off the Lord, the Lord did not take His eye off him; and that even his failing to walk by faith should only be the occasion for displaying fresh activities of his Master's love—His outstretched hand should now be at the service of His faithless servant. "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous" (Job 36:7).

It is therefore by His prevailing intercession with the Father there that I am, by the Spirit of God, brought to broken-hearted confession here. And "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

You may therefore approach the Father with all confidence and unburden your whole heart before Him; if you do, be assured that, in faithfulness and justice to Him who bore our sins and who "ever liveth to make intercession" for us, He will freely pardon. And when He does, surely such grace will make you increasingly jealous lest another false step should again grieve such faithful, unchanging love.

I do not love God as I ought. If I could only find in myself more of the Spirit's fruit I would feel more certain that I was saved.

Nearly half the difficulties of anxious souls are the result of confusing the work of the Spirit, which will not be finished while we are in this body, and the work of Christ finished on the cross.

They read that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering," etc., and if they could but discover this fruit in themselves they imagine that they would have some just ground for considering themselves to be converted.

They think also that the presence of the Holy Spirit will make them feel very good and when they feel the very opposite they are ready to take it for granted that they are not saved.

This is altogether a mistake. Listen:—

'He does not make the soul to say,
Thank God I feel so good;
But turns the eye another way,
To Jesus and His blood.'

Moses was not occupied with his own shining face neither was Stephen with his, though others saw the reflected glory on both. The time when the fruit of the Spirit of God is most effectively produced in us will be when we are most engaged with what Christ is to us and what He has done and is doing for us. It will be when our hearts are so taken up with Christ that we are thinking neither of good self or bad self but only of Him.

It is in beholding His glory that we are "changed into His image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

I heard of a christian woman who got so occupied with her own lack of love for Christ that she finally came to the conclusion that she did not love Him at all. A fellow believer, after trying in vain to comfort her, wrote on a piece of paper: 'I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ' and asked her to sign it.

'No, I will not,' she emphatically replied. How was this? What made her suddenly change her tone? The truth was that she both believed in Him and loved Him but she had been dwelling on what she was towards Him rather than on what He is in His own personal worth.

The measure of our love to Christ is the measure of our appreciation of His love to us (2 Corinthians 5:14, 1 John 4:19).

George Cutting.

THE CHURCH IN FOUR ASPECTS — 3. THE HOUSE

1 Timothy 2 & 3

Mark 11:17

I wish to bring to your attention the truth of the house of God and the features which should mark it. First I want to give an idea of the force of the expression "the house of God", as we gather it from Scripture.

Two expressions are used as to the church; it is the body of Christ and it is the house of God. The latter occurs in 1 Timothy 3, where the apostle says, "These things I write unto thee... that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God". It is a great point for us, and where the truth becomes practical, to see the moral features which were to characterise the house of God; because whatever may

be its present ruin we may return to those moral features. We cannot revive the house of God as it was at the first for the house of God has become practically what is spoken of in the second epistle to Timothy, "a great house" and you have to purge yourselves from vessels to dishonour. The call is to return to the truth as it was from the beginning. Thus it is very important to know what are the true characteristics of the house of God.

Now if you want me to put it in simple plain language the house of God as I understand it is the profession of Christianity, for it is those who profess to be christians who have the responsibility of being the house of God. I fully admit that it has lapsed into the character of "a great house" but in its normal condition it was properly those who called on the name of the Lord Jesus.

Now I must guard that by one remark. The common idea of profession in the present day is that it must always be mere profession; the expression 'profession' is often put in contrast with 'possession'. But the two things ought to go together. It is a great mistake to put aside profession and say it is worth nothing at all. It is very important and carries with it responsibility; the house of God is judged on the ground of the profession they make. Every one of us here tonight is a professed christian; we all call on the name of the Lord Jesus; but I trust that we all have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The five wise virgins were right to have lamps but they not only had lamps but oil in their vessels with their lamps. The five foolish virgins had lamps, that is, the mark of external profession, but they had not oil in their vessels. Their light burnt for a time but there was no spiritual power to sustain the light and hence they were not ready for the bridegroom. Profession is right enough and an intended thing on the part of God. The terrible part is the possibility of having profession without the Holy Spirit. You see it all around in the present day, christian profession without an atom of spiritual power or discernment—mere profession. But profession in itself is right and distinguishes from the world. The world cannot tell whether I have the Holy Spirit and am a member of Christ but the world can tell whether I am consistent with my profession; that is what the world can see.

I desire now to give you some features which are proper to the house of God. The verse in Mark 11 gives us, I think, the great idea of the house of God: Jesus taught them, saying, "Is it not written, My house shall be called of all the nations the house of prayer? but ye have turned it into a den of thieves". There is not in that passage anything connected with the worship of God or the

temple service but the Lord speaks, as in Isaiah 56:7, of the house of God as being a house of prayer for all the nations. It is really, if I understand it, the point where God put Himself in contact with those who were outside His people; it was for all nations. I think we get the same principle in 1 Timothy 2, in these verses: "I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty".

That is the first feature which is to characterise the house of God—prayer for all men. Christians are not to be indifferent to the welfare of all men nor, indeed, to the government of God down here; therefore believers are put in the place of intercession and prayer is to be the great characteristic of the house of God.

Mark now the verses that follow. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth." The truth resided in the believers, in the house, but the thought of God went out to all men. The apostle goes on to say, "For there is one God, and one mediator"—not between men and God but—"between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all". The truth of it was in the house and it was in the house that the attitude of God toward all men was known and therefore the church was to make intercession for all men, "that we might live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty"; that is, that there might be no hindrance to the promulgation of God's thought and will in regard to all men. There is an adequate ground for it in that Christ had given Himself "a ransom for all".

Nothing is a greater hindrance to the truth than the exclusive use of one side of it. Take an Arminian on the one hand or a Calvinist on the other; both are great hinderers of the truth because they take up one side of the truth and exclude the other. What we want is the even balance between the two. I believe on the one hand in the truth of election; I am perfectly confident that you could have no security for anything without it; if God is going to have a family in heaven, it must be an elect family. On the other hand, I find the truth equally clearly stated in Scripture, that "there is... one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all".

What I have said gives you, I think, the position of the house of God. It is not a question of a local assembly; it is the position of the christian profession, on

the one hand in regard to God and on the other in regard to all men, and the first great characteristic of christian profession is prayer.

To go on in the passage. It says, "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel... and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." Again I make the remark that the apostle was not concerned with a meeting, a local assembly, but with the proper character of the christian profession. The house of God is to be marked by piety and decorous demeanour; what is to mark the men is prayer and what is to adorn the woman is good works.

I often think how little we carry out those things, how little the men are characterised by prayer. So, too, in regard to women; there is to be the absence of the adornment that passes current in the world "but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works". The point is that the adornment of the women is not to be external but moral and a beautiful adornment it is!

Elsewhere, the adornment mentioned is that of "a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price". A woman is not to be conspicuous because she has to bow her head in remembrance that Eve was in transgression. Adam was not deceived; the woman was deceived. "The serpent beguiled Eve by his subtilty"; the woman, as having been deceived, has to accept it and is to be adorned—you can understand the contrast—by good works and to be in all subjection to the man. That is the relative place of the man and the woman in the house of God, where God, as it were, touches man and where prayer and intercession go up to God for all men.

There are two other features given in the third chapter which mark the house of God, oversight and ministry. You could not conceive God's house being a scene of confusion or uncared for; such a thought would not be worthy of God. "God is not the author of confusion". When I speak of 'ministry', I do not refer to ministry in a spiritual sense but as meeting temporal needs. There was to be oversight in regard to men's souls and ministry in regard to their

bodies. Those were the two things which were to be seen in the house of God for the house of God was regulated of God; it was where God was. Hence it says, "If any man desire the office of a bishop"—that is, an overseer—"he desireth a good work". A man was justified in coveting the office of an overseer. And the marks of an overseer are given in order that one who was competent to be such might be recognised. Then, too, there was ministry for the temporal needs and not on the part of men only but on the part of women for there is the recognition, not only of deacons, but of deaconesses, and the qualifications are given here also.

There is no such thing as an appointing power for such offices now but the qualifications are given in order that an elder or a deacon might be recognised. A man who desired the office of an overseer must be a married man and have children. He proves his competency to exercise oversight in the house of God by the way in which he rules his own family. If a man has a disorderly family, if he has not his own children in subjection, though he might be a teacher or have some other gift, yet he was not competent to be an elder and to care for the house of God. So, too, with regard to a deacon; a deacon was to be a married man, or else he could not well enter into his work, and he was to have an orderly house.

There is an important word in connection with the deacon, that those who exercise "the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus". It has often been noticed, and I think truly, that this was exemplified in the case of Stephen; he began by being a deacon and afterwards he became a most distinguished witness of Christ; he purchased to himself "a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Then the apostle tells Timothy the reason he writes. He writes, "hoping to come to thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth". It is a very great thing for any man to know how he is to behave himself in the house of God, that is, in the sphere of christian profession, especially one in the place of a servant.

There is a further thought. Even in the apostle's day, alas! you see profession parting company from possession and the house of God becoming "a great house" and hence the apostle saw the need for saints purging themselves from vessels to dishonour. You cannot get out of the house, for you can get out of

christian profession only by apostasy, but you have to purge yourselves from vessels to dishonour and to "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart". Most of us have had to leave associations in which perhaps we were born and brought up to purge ourselves from vessels to dishonour and to find out another path, that is, to "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart". But then, if you have done that, you want guidance and the only guidance which you have from God is the original order of the house of God. You cannot re-establish the house of God; it is going on to judgment (see 1 Peter 4:17); but you can understand the principles that were to be seen in the house of God and fall back upon them for your guidance. We can see what was to characterise the men and what was to adorn the women, the prayer and the good works and we can see, too, the oversight and the ministry which were provided there.

That is our path, beloved friends. One of the greatest privileges that I know of is that we can return to first principles. When I first came away from other associations, I remember being confronted with the idea that what you find in Scripture as to the early days is impractical now. But what is of God and God's direction can never be impracticable. The Spirit is still here and the point is to go back to what was from the outset. It is the only guidance you have.

I trust by the grace of God I have made the thought of the house somewhat plain. But alas! the house of God, in its present character, is going on to judgment. It will be left by all that is of God and the heaviest judgments from God will fall upon that which has had the responsibility of being the house of God. Thank God, we have been awakened to see it and to purge ourselves and may God give us grace that in lowliness of mind we may go on pursuing "righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart", guided by the true principles of the house of God.

May God stir up the men to prayer—I am sure we need to be stirred up to it—and the women to care less about outward adornment, but that they may be adorned with good works. That is the adornment for God and that is the true adornment in the presence of men.

F.E.Raven
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